

AFC QUARTERLY

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION

ISSUE 7



PALESTINE

AFC Challenge Cup win
finalises AFC Asian Cup
Australia 2015 line-up

BRAZIL BOUND

Asia's four-way
challenge for the
FIFA World Cup
kicks off

ISSUE 7

June 2014

PLUS SAUDI ARABIA

Elections and reforms mean
a new era is underway for
one of the continent's
powerhouse nations



HONG MYUNG-BO

Korea Republic coach
gears up for the
challenges facing his
young team in Brazil



PUNE FC

Youth is no obstacle
as ambitious Indian
club target domestic
and continental glory



ANGE POSTECOGLOU

Australia coach rings the
changes as Socceroos prepare
to usher in new generation at
FIFA World Cup



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Shaikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President



Dear friends,

Every four years football fans everywhere turn their attention to what is maybe the world's greatest sporting spectacle, the FIFA World Cup.

All of us in the Asian football family are also fans of the beautiful game and I will be following the tournament enthusiastically with a particular interest in Australia, Iran, Japan and Korea Republic, who I am confident will represent Asia with pride, passion and in the spirit of fair play. With the AFC Asian Cup 2015 on the horizon it will be interesting to see what impact their experiences at the World Cup finals might have on their build up to next year's Asian flagship tournament.

Before we enjoy the fiesta of football that Brazil 2014 promises to be, we will have conducted the AFC Extraordinary Congress where we will continue our journey of reform and innovation in an atmosphere of unity, mutual respect and constructive dialogue.

During my time in office I have already seen considerable improvements as we continue to work hand-in-hand with our member associations to develop the Asian game.

I was particularly pleased with the number of our Member Associations that embraced AFC Grassroots Day with 29 countries officially declaring their commitment to marking the occasion.

This is more than double the number who celebrated it in 2013, AFC Grassroots Year, and reflects the growing importance our MAs are giving to grassroots football. As always, the AFC will continue to support our member associations and provide them with the support and resources they need to develop the game in their country.

Strategic and sustainable development is one of the cornerstones of success and as an example of this we need to look no further than Japan, who have recently won the AFC Futsal Championship and the AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Women's football in Asia is most definitely on the rise and it is one of the many areas that the AFC has been, and will continue to be, developing alongside our member associations now and in the future.

Shaikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa
AFC President

THE PINNACLE



D4 / D800





Dato' Alex Soosay
AFC General Secretary



Dear friends,

There is no question that the FIFA World Cup is one of the biggest and most eagerly anticipated sporting spectacles – so not surprisingly Brazil 2014 dominates this edition of AFC Quarterly.

Not only are Asia's four representatives profiled in depth we also have conducted exclusive interviews with the four head coaches giving us an interesting insight into the views of individuals who are leading sides at the very highest level of world football.

One nation that has participated regularly at the FIFA World Cup is Saudi Arabia and while they failed to make it this time round they remain one of Asia's most successful nations at club and international level. AFC Quarterly shines the spotlight on the three-time AFC Asian Cup winners in our regular Member Association feature.

For our club feature we head to India to profile Pune FC while we also recap what has been an action-packed few months of Asian football with the AFC Women's Asian Cup, the AFC Futsal Championship and the group stage of the AFC President's reviewed along with our regular updates on the AFC Champions League and AFC Cup.

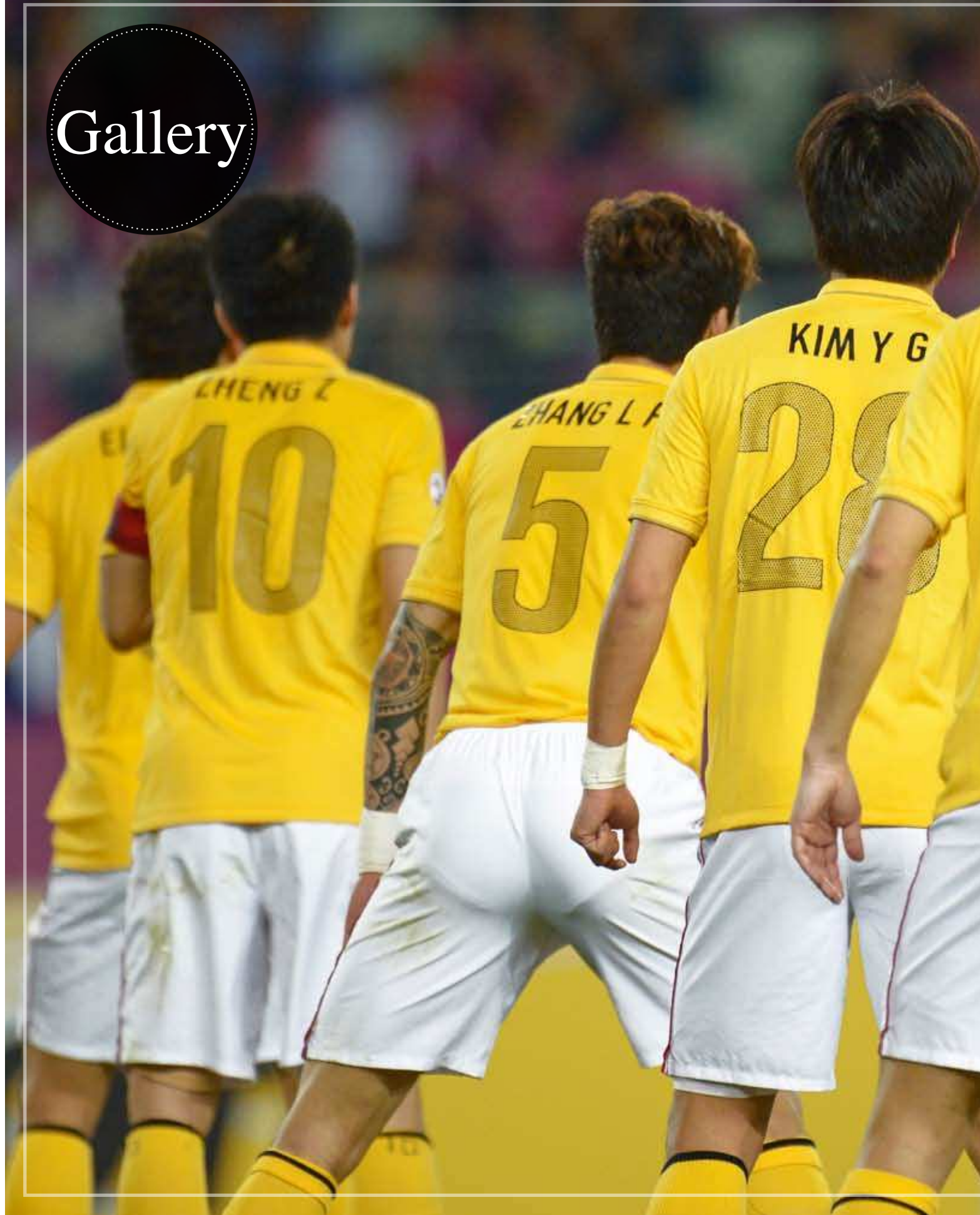
We have always been proud of our referees and our top officials stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the best in the world.

An example of this is four-time AFC Referee of the Year Ravshan Irmatov, who can list the 2011 AFC Asian Cup final and the opening match of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa amongst his list of accomplishments. For more insights into the career of the popular Uzbek referee be sure to read the exclusive interview in this edition of the AFC Quarterly.

Our quarterly publication represents only a small window of the quality and character prevalent in all areas of our football and I would like to thank you all for your continuing support of the Asian game.

Dato' Alex Soosay
AFC General Secretary

Gallery





.....
**Champion
Line-Up**
.....

Defending champions Guangzhou Evergrande qualified for the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League, which will take place in August, alongside five former continental champions after beating Japan's Cerezo Osaka in the Round of 16 in May.

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Gallery



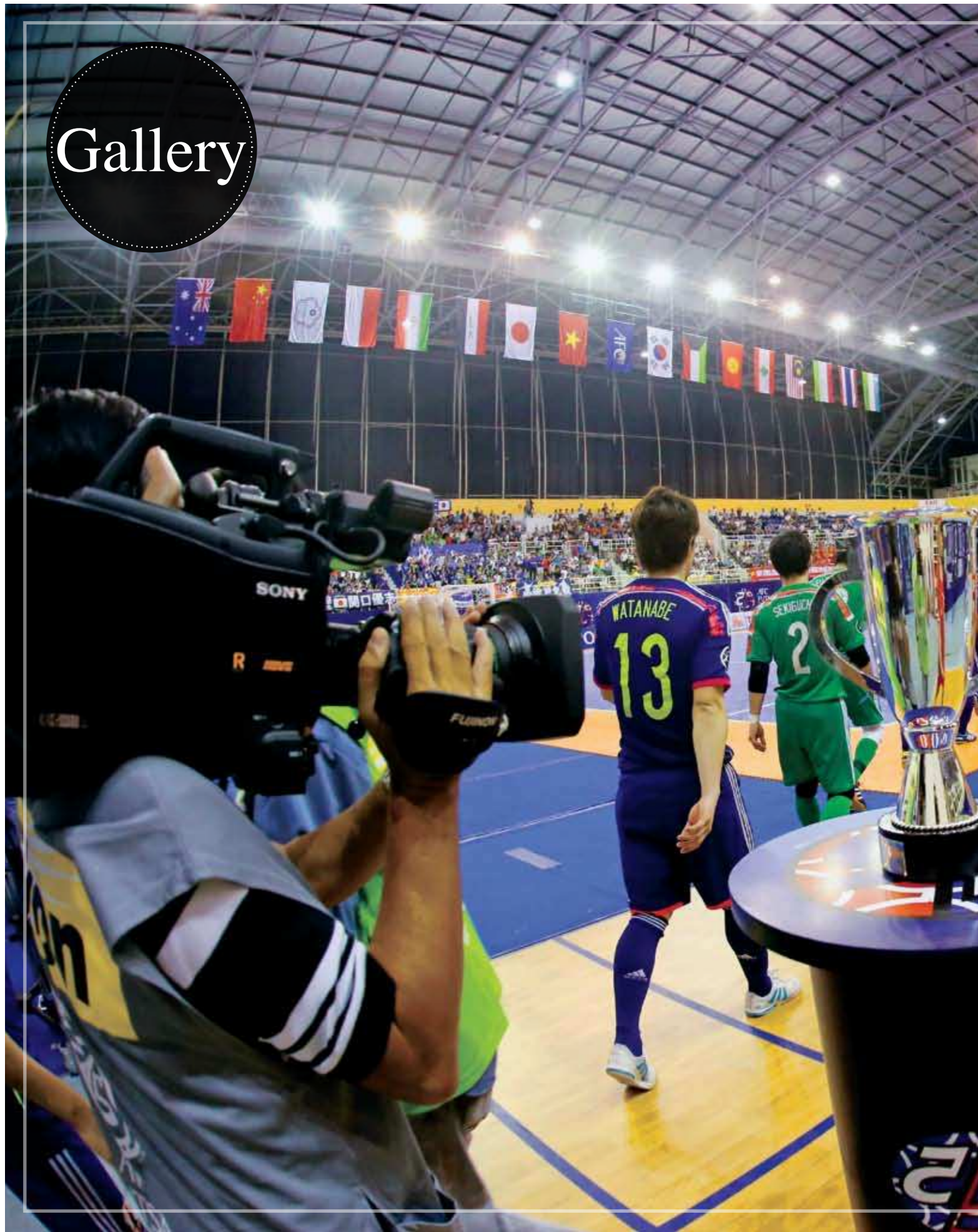


.....
**Immediate
Impact**
.....

Despite only being appointed in March after leading Saudi Arabia to the final of the inaugural AFC U-22 Championship earlier this year, coach Khalid Al Koroni helped two-time winners Al Ittihad qualify for the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League for a seventh time.

.....

Gallery





Hat-Trick For Japan

Defending champions Japan edged out 10-time winners Iran on penalties to win a third AFC Futsal Championship title in Vietnam at the start of May, with the final taking place at Phu Tho Stadium in Ho Chi Minh City.



Challenge Cup Joy for Palestine

PALESTINE COMPLETED THE LINE-UP FOR THE AFC ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2015 AFTER BEATING THE PHILIPPINES IN THE AFC CHALLENGE CUP FINAL IN MAY TO JOIN DEFENDING CHAMPIONS JAPAN, JORDAN AND IRAQ IN GROUP D.

Ashraf Al Fawaghra scored the only goal as Palestine recorded a 1-0 win over the Philippines in the final of the AFC Challenge Cup to become the 16th and final qualifier for the AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015.

Al Fawaghra crucially netted his fourth goal of the campaign a minute before the hour mark at the National Stadium in Male as Palestine completed an unbeaten campaign in the Maldives without conceding a goal.

And with the winner of the final edition of the AFC Challenge Cup also securing the final berth at the AFC Asian Cup, Palestine will join defending champions Japan, Jordan and Iraq in Group D in Australia next year.

"This was a historic match and a historic achievement," said Palestine coach Jamal

Mahmoud.

"We had experience in the last Challenge Cup when we made mistakes and we took that experience for this championship."

And with Al Fawaghra's final strike lifting the striker above Maldives captain Ali Ashfaq at the top of the goal scoring charts to claim the top scorer accolade, team-mate Murad Said ensured a clean sweep of the individual awards as the midfielder was named the tournament's MVP.

Both sides had reached the final with unbeaten records after Palestine topped Group A ahead of the Maldives, while their fellow 2012 semi-finalists the Philippines had edged out SAFF champions Afghanistan in Group B.

Al Fawaghra then scored twice as Palestine beat Afghanistan 2-0, while Chris Greatwich netted the extra-time winner as

the Philippines edged out the Maldives 3-2 to eliminate the home side.

But despite beating Palestine in the third place play-off at the 2012 AFC Challenge Cup, the Philippines fell short of building on back-to-back semi-final appearances at the last two editions of the AFF Championship.

"My task was to win the Challenge Cup and I didn't," said Philippines coach Thomas Dooley, who was only appointed in February.

"But on the other hand, I was trying to build something with the team and I think we did a pretty good job through to the final, so I think this team has a bright future."

The Maldives were able to recover from their semi-final defeat by the Philippines to claim third place after edging out Afghanistan 8-7 on penalties following a 1-1 draw after extra-time.



Guangzhou to face Western Sydney In ACL Quarter-Finals

THE DRAW FOR THE QUARTER-FINALS OF THE 2014 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE, WITH THE TIES SET TO TAKE PLACE IN AUGUST, SEES LIPPI'S HOLDERS TAKE ON TOURNAMENT DEBUTANTS WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS

Reigning champions Guangzhou Evergrande will take on Australia's Western Sydney Wanderers in the quarter-finals of the 2014 AFC Champions League as Marcello Lippi's team seek to become only the second side to successfully retain the title.

Guangzhou, who became the first Chinese club to win the title when they defeated FC Seoul in last year's final, travel to Australia for the first leg on August 20 before hosting the

return fixture week later.

The winners will face opposition from Korea Republic after Pohang Steelers and FC Seoul were drawn to face one another, setting up the prospect in the semi-finals of a repeat of the 2013 final when Guangzhou defeated FC Seoul on the away goals rule.

"Western Sydney are a very competitive team and we have lost one game in Australia already this year. They're a good team and, even though they're younger than all the other teams, we will still have to prepare well," said Guangzhou captain and reigning AFC Player

of the Year Zheng Zhi.

In the western half of the draw, Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad, the only team to win back-to-back AFC Champions League titles when they did so in 2004 and 2005, meet inaugural winners Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates in the quarter-finals in a re-run of the 2005 final won by Al Ittihad.

Al Hilal, another former continental champion, take on 2012 winners Al Sadd from Qatar with the Saudi side hosting the first leg at the King Fahd International Stadium.

QUARTER-FINALS DRAW

19/08/14 Al Hilal (KSA) vs Al Sadd (QAT)	19/08/14 Al Ain (UAE) vs Al Ittihad (KSA)	20/08/14 Pohang Steelers (KOR) vs FC Seoul (KOR)	20/08/14 Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS) vs Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN)
26/08/14 Al Sadd (QAT) vs Al Hilal (KSA)	26/08/14 Al Ittihad (KSA) vs Al Ain (UAE)	27/08/14 FC Seoul (KOR) vs Pohang Steelers (KOR)	27/08/14 Guangzhou Evergrande (CHN) vs Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS)

Tough Draw For Defending U-19 Champions

Defending champions Korea Republic will face Japan, China and Vietnam in a strong Group C at the AFC U-19 Championship in Myanmar in October. Hosts Myanmar have been drawn in Group A alongside Iran, neighbours Thailand and Yemen, with 2012 semi-finalists Uzbekistan and Australia joined in Group B by the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia.

And Group D will comprise of 2012 runners-up Iraq, DPR Korea, Qatar and Oman.

"It is really surprising that we face Japan and China in the group stages," said Korea Republic coach Kim Sang-ho.

"It's a tough one to prepare for since all the big East Asian sides are in Group C so there is no other way than to prepare yourselves right for the tournament.

"The three teams in the group will be analysed thoroughly in advance and our focus will be on improving on any weakness in

training.

"At this level there are no favourites and all the participating sides are difficult opposition so the only way to come out on top is by preparing well and working on details," he added.

"It's more pressure as we are the defending champions but the aim this time around is also clear: win it another time.

"Qualifying for the FIFA U-20 World Cup is important but our first aim is to be champions again."

The 16-nation competition will be staged at Yangon's Youth Training Centre Stadium and Nay Pyi Taw's

Zeyar Thiri Stadium, with the top four finishers qualifying for the 2015 FIFA U-20 World Cup in New Zealand.

"First and foremost, everything is possible in football so the draw for us is not so cruel," said Myanmar coach Gerd Zeise. "Our first target

is to see off the group stage and we have realistic chances of doing this with huge home support for our side. At home, we can stun the big boys."



Group A	Myanmar • Iran • Thailand • Yemen
Group B	Uzbekistan • Australia • UAE • Indonesia
Group C	Korea Republic • Japan • China • Vietnam
Group D	Iraq • DPR Korea • Qatar • Oman

Jayapura Test For Kuwait SC

Defending AFC Cup champions Kuwait SC will take on Indonesia's Persipura Jayapura in the quarter-finals of the 2014 tournament following May's draw in Kuala Lumpur as the Gulf side chases a record fourth title.

Kuwait SC have claimed the crown on three occasions in the last five seasons, first winning the title in 2009 before claiming back-to-back successes in 2012 and 2013.

Standing in their way of advancing to the semi-finals once again will be the Indonesian Super League champions, who reached the quarter-finals of the AFC Cup in 2011.

"It's a good draw for us, we're happy with it. Kuwait SC have more experience than us but we will do our best," said Jayapura representative Rocky Beben.

"We have experience of playing in the Middle East from 2009 when we went to Arbil and we only lost 1-0 there. So we're not concerned about the travel.



"Our target this year was to win the Indonesia Super League and to reach the semi-finals of the AFC Cup, and if we do that we will be the first Indonesian team to go that far. We're confident we can do well, even though it will be tough."

Should Kuwait SC advance, they could potentially face fellow Kuwaiti side Qadsia SC in the semi-finals in a re-match of the 2013 final after last year's runner-up were drawn to face Bahrain's Al Hidd in August's quarter-finals.

Arbil, who lost to Kuwait SC in the 2012 final, will take on

Vietnam's Hanoi T&T with either Hong Kong's Kitchee or Vietnam's XM Vissai Ninh Binh awaiting in the semi-finals.

The first leg of the quarter-finals will be played on August 19, with the return fixtures taking place a week later.

The semi-finals will be played on a home-and-away basis on September 16 and 30, with the final to be played as a one-off game on October 18, to be hosted by the side that emerges from the quartet of Hanoi, Arbil, Ninh Binh and Kitchee.



QUARTER-FINALS DRAW

19/08/14 Hanoi T&T (VIE) vs Arbil (IRQ)	19/08/14 XM Vissai Ninh Binh (VIE) vs Kitchee (HKG)	19/08/14 Qadsia SC (KUW) vs Al Hidd (BHR)	19/08/14 Kuwait SC (KUW) vs Persipura Jayapura (IDN)
26/08/14 Arbil (IRQ) vs Hanoi T&T (VIE)	26/08/14 Kitchee (HKG) vs XM Vissai Ninh Binh (VIE)	26/08/14 Al Hidd (BHR) vs Qadsia SC (KUW)	26/08/14 Persipura Jayapura (IDN) vs Kuwait SC (KUW)



Japan Lift Maiden AFC Women's Asian Cup Title

AZUSA IWASHIMIZU SCORED THE ONLY GOAL IN THE FINAL AS WORLD CHAMPIONS JAPAN CLAIMED A FIRST-EVER AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP CROWN AT THE END OF MAY AFTER EDGING OUT DEFENDING CHAMPIONS AUSTRALIA.

World champions Japan won the AFC Women's Asian Cup title for the first time in May after edging out defending champions Australia 1-0 in the final in Ho Chi Minh City. Having fallen short at the semi-final stage in both 2008 and 2010, Azusa Iwashimizu's first half header ended Japan's wait for their maiden continental title having made their first appearance at the tournament in 1977. Japan finished the tournament with an unbeaten record after topping a group that included Australia, debutants Jordan and hosts Vietnam before eliminating China with a dramatic extra-time winner in their semi-final. "As a team we really wanted to win this

title," said captain and midfield playmaker Aya Miyama. "This is the best feeling I have now, after all the effort we have done in this campaign." Despite their final defeat, Australia had already secured their qualification for the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup alongside Japan, China, Korea Republic and Thailand. "With the way we performed today and in the competition as a whole it makes me extremely proud of the team," said Australia coach Alen Stajcic following the final defeat at Thong Nhat Stadium. "We fought to the death, never gave up and the effort from our players was fantastic." Eight-time champions China had suffered an agonising 2-1 loss to Japan in the semi-finals after conceding in the last seconds of extra-time through Iwashimizu,

but the Steel Roses recovered to claim third place after recording a 2-1 win over Korea. "Winning the game and coming third does of course bring more promotion to women's football in China, but we have a longer term goal than just qualifying for the World Cup," said China coach Hao Wei. "With better results in the future we can aim to win games even in the final of the World Cup." Thailand claimed a first-ever place at the Women's World Cup after their 2-1 victory over Vietnam in the fifth place play-off secured qualification for next year's event in Canada. Two-time AFC Women's Player of the Year Miyama, meanwhile, was named MVP of the tournament while Korea striker Park Eun-sun claimed the top scorer honour after netting six goals.

PRIDE OF ASIA

JAPAN, IRAN, AUSTRALIA
AND KOREA REPUBLIC
TRAVEL TO BRAZIL TO
REPRESENT ASIA AT THE
FIFA WORLD CUP, AIMING
TO BREAK NEW GROUND
FOR THE CONTINENT.

By: Michael Church Photos: World Sport Group/Getty Images

From the tropical north, into the Amazonian basin and down to the country's temperate southern coast, Brazil – the home of the five-time world champions and of 'joga bonito' – holds the destiny of Asia's quadrennial challenge for glory at the FIFA World Cup.

Once again, four nations – Japan, Iran, Australia and Korea Republic – will carry the hopes of the entire continent into the cauldron of competition, aiming to show to the world that Asia's game continues to move forward at pace.

The quartet have all been on the biggest stage before, at one time or another, and Brazil 2014 will see them attempt to build on their performances in the past as they aim to make their mark at the greatest show of them all.

The memories of South Africa 2010 remain freshest, but Asia's performances at the FIFA World Cup have seen a steady

trajectory upwards in the years since the continent was first represented at the global championship.

Back in 1938 – 16 years before the founding of the Asian Football Confederation – Asia was represented at the World Cup for the first time, the Dutch East Indies, the precursor to modern-day Indonesia, taking part in France, only to lose their solitary game, against Hungary.

It was a modest beginning for Asian football, and it set an initial precedent as it highlighted the gap that existed in those early years between the continent and the pinnacle of world football.

Korea Republic, too, returned home in a chastened mood when they appeared at their first FIFA World Cup in Switzerland in 1954, but it was their northern counterparts DPR Korea who 12 years later first proved footballers from the continent could hold their own against the elite.

The now famous tale of Pak Do-ik and his team-mates handing Italy a 1-0 defeat







at Ayresome Park in Middlesbrough is one of the legends of the FIFA World Cup, as is the story of Eusebio's hat-trick in the resultant quarter-final against DPR Korea that saw Portugal end Asian hopes and break Korean hearts with a spectacular come-from-behind 5-3 win.

And it would not be until 1994 in the United States that another Asian side would progress to the knockout rounds of the FIFA World Cup.

Iran, Kuwait, Korea Republic, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates all appeared at the finals from 1978 through to 1990, exiting the competition at the end of the group stages.

Saudi Arabia, however, finally bucked that trend and ushered in a new era.

Saaed Owairan became part of FIFA World Cup lore after he slalomed his way through the Belgium defence on the way to scoring the goal that secured the Gulf nation a place in the last 16 having earlier defeated Morocco.

A 3-1 defeat at the hands of a Sweden side that would go on to finish third overall brought their run to an end, but it was a precursor of things to come.

By 2002, Asian football was firmly establishing itself on the global stage, not only on the field of play but in terms of holding key events as Korea Republic and Japan co-hosted the FIFA World Cup, the continent's first.

The pair's performances on home soil

in South Africa in 2010, with both reaching the Round of 16 before the Japanese lost to Paraguay in a penalty shootout while Uruguay edged the Koreans by virtue of two goals from Luis Suarez.

The results made history once more, marking the first time either nation had reached the knockout phase on foreign soil and the first time two Asian countries had advanced to the Round of 16 outside the continent.

Now, as the FIFA World Cup prepares to kick-off in Brazil, another chapter in Asia's World Cup history is ready to be written.

Iran will be aiming to progress to the knockout phase for the first time in what will be their fourth FIFA World Cup, while Japan and Korea Republic will strive to build on their successes in South Africa.

Australia, with a young squad and drawn in the toughest of groups, will be looking as much to the future and the nation's hosting of the AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 in January next year.

All four carry the hopes and expectations of the Asian game on their shoulders, and each one of the quartet will no doubt strive to do Asia proud.



matched the auspicious occasion as Japan advanced to the Round of 16 in only their second ever appearance at the FIFA World Cup, while the Koreans surpassed all expectations, falling in the semi-finals to Germany.

The same two nations would impress again

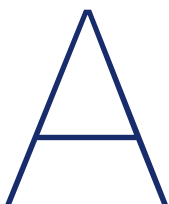
ASIA AT THE FIFA WORLD CUP

Year	Hosts	Representatives	Round	Results	Year	Hosts	Representatives	Round	Results
1938	France	 Dutch East Indies	First	Hungary 6 Dutch East Indies 0			 Korea Republic	Group	Korea Republic 2 Poland 0
1954	Switzerland	 Korea Republic	Group	Hungary 9 Korea Republic 0 Turkey 7 Korea Republic 0					Korea Republic 1 United States 1 Portugal 0 Korea Republic 1
1966	England	 DPR Korea	Group	Soviet Union 3 DPR Korea 0 Chile 1 DPR Korea 1 DPR Korea 1 Italy 0					Round of 16 Korea Republic 2 Italy 1 (aet)
				Quarter-Final Portugal 5 DPR Korea 3					Quarter-Final Spain 0 Korea Republic 0 (3-5 pens)
1978	Argentina	 Iran	Group	Netherlands 3 Iran 0 Scotland 1 Iran 1 Peru 4 Iran 1					Semi-Final Germany 1 Korea Republic 0
									Third Place Korea Republic 2 Turkey 3
1982	Spain	 Kuwait	Group	Czechoslovakia 1 Kuwait 1 France 4 Kuwait 1 England 1 Kuwait 0			 Saudi Arabia	Group	Germany 8 Saudi Arabia 0 Cameroon 1 Saudi Arabia 0 Saudi Arabia 0 Ireland 3
1986	Mexico	 Korea Republic	Group	Argentina 3 Korea Republic 1 Korea Republic 1 Bulgaria 1 Italy 3 Korea Republic 2			 Japan	Group	Japan 2 Belgium 2 Japan 1 Russia 0 Tunisia 0 Japan 2
		 Iraq	Group	Paraguay 1 Iraq 0 Iraq 1 Belgium 2 Iraq 0 Mexico 1					Round of 16 Japan 0 Turkey 1
1990	Italy	 United Arab Emirates	Group	UAE 0 Colombia 2 West Germany 5 UAE 1 Yugoslavia 4 UAE 1	2006	Germany	 Iran	Group	Mexico 3 Iran 1 Portugal 2 Iran 0 Iran 1 Angola 1
		 Korea Republic	Group	Belgium 2 Korea Republic 0 Korea Republic 1 Spain 3 Korea Republic 0 Uruguay 1			 Japan	Group	Australia 3 Japan 1 Japan 0 Croatia 0 Japan 1 Brazil 4
1994	United States	 Korea Republic	Group	Spain 2 Korea Republic 2 Korea 0 Bolivia 0 Germany 3 Korea Republic 2			 Korea Republic	Group	Korea Republic 2 Togo 1 France 1 Korea Republic 1 Switzerland 2 Korea Republic 0
		 Saudi Arabia	Group	Netherlands 2 Saudi Arabia 1 Saudi Arabia 2 Morocco 1 Saudi Arabia 1 Belgium 0			 Saudi Arabia	Group	Tunisia 2 Saudi Arabia 2 Saudi Arabia 0 Ukraine 4 Saudi Arabia 0 Spain 1
				Round of 16 Sweden 3 Saudi Arabia 1	2010	South Africa	 Korea Republic	Group	Korea Republic 2 Greece 0 Argentina 4 Korea Republic 1 Nigeria 2 Korea Republic 2
1998	France	 Saudi Arabia	Group	Denmark 1 Saudi Arabia 0 France 4 Saudi Arabia 0 Saudi Arabia 2 South Africa 2					Round of 16 Uruguay 2 Korea Republic 0
		 Korea Republic	Group	Korea Republic 1 Mexico 3 Netherlands 5 Korea Republic 0 Belgium 1 Korea Republic 1			 Australia	Group	Germany 4 Australia 0 Ghana 1 Australia 1 Australia 2 Serbia 1
		 Iran	Group	Yugoslavia 1 Iran 0 United States 1 Iran 2 Germany 2 Iran 0			 Japan	Group	Japan 1 Denmark 0 Netherlands 1 Japan 0 Japan 3 Denmark 1
		 Japan	Group	Argentina 1 Japan 0 Japan 0 Croatia 1 Japan 1 Jamaica 2					Round of 16 Japan 0 Paraguay 0 (3-5 on pens)
2002	Korea/Japan	 China	Group	China 0 Costa Rica 2 Brazil 4 China 0 Turkey 3 China 0			 DPR Korea	Group	Brazil 2 Korea DPR 1 Portugal 7 Korea DPR 0 DPR Korea 0 Cote D'Ivoire 3

SAMURAI SERENITY

JAPAN GO TO BRAZIL AS AFC ASIAN CUP HOLDERS AND HOPING TO BUILD ON THEIR RUN TO THE ROUND OF 16 IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 2010. ALBERTO ZACCHERONI SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON THE TOURNAMENT WITH AFC QUARTERLY AND JAPAN'S AIM TO GO FURTHER THAN EVER BEFORE.

By: Michael Church Photos: Agence SHOT



Alberto Zaccheroni could not have hoped to make a greater impact in his first six months as Japan coach: as honeymoon periods go, the blissful afterglow that succeeded his appointment extended through a first-ever win over Argentina followed by the reclaiming of the AFC Asian Cup title.

Indeed, over the close to four years since the former AC Milan and Juventus coach took the reins, there have been relatively few bumps along the way. Late jitters delayed rather than derailed the

quest for a fifth straight FIFA World Cup appearance while perhaps the only dip was the failure to pick up a point at the FIFA Confederations Cup.

Qualification for Brazil 2014 was achieved with a degree of comfort and now, amid such relative serenity, Zaccheroni and the Samurai Blue are setting their sights on taking on – and beating – the world's elite.

"The goal is to reach the tournament in the best possible condition, both physically and mentally," says Zaccheroni of the task ahead.

"As a coach, I think that demonstrating we are a good team that plays attractive







football is our goal.

"But the bottom line is that the results will determine the outcome of our performance at the World Cup, so surpassing the achievements reached in previous editions of the tournament is what we will aim at."

With Japan having previously reached the Round of 16 on two occasions – in 2002 on home soil and in South Africa four years ago – that means at least reaching the quarter-finals, a feat only previously achieved twice by Asian nations: DPR Korea in 1966 and Korea Republic, who reached the semi-finals when they co-hosted the tournament with the Japanese in 2002.

Having been drawn in a group that features Cote D'Ivoire, Greece and Colombia, advancing to the knockout rounds will be no easy task for the Japanese, but Zaccheroni and his team are relishing the kick off when it comes.

"The World Cup is a moment that the team and I have been waiting for, and we go to Brazil with great will and determination to do well," says the Italian.

"In my line of work, the possibility of working with the team daily for a relatively

long period of time is extremely significant and crucial to the development of the team, so I will look to consolidate the groundwork that we have done to have a good run at the tournament.

"I believe that the work that we have put into preparing for the competition has been very positive, and the whole staff is gearing up to give his best in all respective roles."

Stability has been a key component since the start of the Zaccheroni era and the Italian has steadily and consistently moved the team towards their goal in Brazil, starting with that win over the Argentinians and victory against Australia in the final of the AFC Asian Cup in Doha in January 2011.

"Thinking back to the Asian Cup in Qatar, the first official competition after a few months in charge, it will remain a milestone of this experience," says Zaccheroni of Japan's record-breaking fourth continental title win.

"Since the first day at training camp I felt how tight the team is, always finding the right balance from within. We didn't have easy games – apart from a comfortable win against Saudi Arabia – due to cards and going behind early in the games, often finding it hard to get

the result.

"But the response I received from the players was extraordinary, both from the starting members and those who joined from the bench. The victory in the final, with a spectacular goal in extra time against Australia, confirmed all of this and gave us great confidence in going forward and qualifying for the World Cup."

Building on their regional success, now, is the target and friendly matches in November against the Netherlands and Belgium – which ended in a 2-2 draw and a 3-2 win respectively – have given Zaccheroni the belief his team is well equipped to handle the challenges that lie ahead.

"The recent friendly games played in Europe against the Netherlands and Belgium have been very important and beneficial," he says.

"One of my biggest personal regrets is not to have been able to participate in the Copa America, however, the great competitions we experienced have helped us gain and develop information at a technical and strategic level that will be fundamental for the upcoming World Cup.



"As a manager, the aim is to play the way we always do entertaining the crowds, having good conditions both physically and mentally to do so. Results wise we simply aim to reach higher than we did in previous editions of the tournament.

"During the World Cup we will experience the highest levels of performance in international football, and we will look at our opponents with great respect but without fear. If our opponents are better than us, it will be a pleasure to shake their hands."

Zaccheroni's contract with the Japan Football Association is due to expire at the end of the FIFA World Cup and, with the Italian fully focused on the task at hand in Brazil, he refuses to look beyond the tournament in South America.

But since agreeing to take on the role at the end of August 2010, he has been impressed with the work ethic and technical ability of the Japanese, although his tenure has not been without its issues with key players such as Keisuke Honda and Shinji Kagawa have spent significant time on the bench since joining AC Milan and Manchester United respectively.

"It is important to recognise the small but existing lack of experience compared to one of the foreign world-class teams, an issue that has to be of fundamental consideration for the future," says Zaccheroni of the few difficulties he has encountered.

"When I first came to Japan, I was surprised by the quality of football in this country. Characteristics such as the desire to learn, a great attitude towards hard work, as well as the appreciation of roles and responsibilities typical of this country, and the great approach to teamwork, helped me live this extraordinary experience.

"Thanks to the great efforts of the staff, and except a few recurring worries linked to transfers and the issue of distance, we were able to steadily follow and work with players playing overseas, primarily in the European leagues."

Japan kick off their World Cup campaign against Cote D'Ivoire in Recife on June 14 before travelling to Natal to meet Greece on June 19 and then concluding their matches in Group C against Colombia in Cuiaba on June 24.

Should they progress to the next phase,

Zaccheroni and his team will face off against either the winners or runners-up from Group D in Recife or Rio de Janeiro.

But the 61-year-old coach is not thinking any further ahead than the group stages for now.

"We expect to challenge Cote D'Ivoire and Greece, two extremely entertaining teams," says Zaccheroni.

"They are two very different teams: the first with great athletic strength, and a very powerful offence, having world class players such as Didier Drogba, Gervinho and Yaya Toure, who all play in Europe at the highest levels.

"Greece have a great structure and are well organised, their brand of football may be less spectacular, but it will be another difficult match.

"As I have said before, I think Colombia has an edge, due to the quality of their players, including the bench.

"Our strength is going to be in playing our own brand of football, taking the game to the opponent, taking advantage of our qualities without having to adjust to the other team."



FIFA World Cup Record

Qualified: 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010

Best Performance: Round of 16 - 2002 & 2010

Best Result: 2010 - 3-1 v Denmark

Wins: 4 **Draws:** 3 **Losses:** 7



A

Africa four years ago.

Japan's performance in 2010 – they were knocked out on penalties by Paraguay – came despite a negative build-up to the tournament

Alberto Zaccheroni takes the Asian champions to their fifth straight FIFA World Cup with the AFC Asian Cup holders targeting a place in the latter stages of the tournament after reaching the Round of 16 in South

under Takeshi Okada and matters could not be more different ahead of their trip to Brazil.

Zaccheroni's team impressed at the FIFA Confederations Cup last year even if they failed to progress beyond the group stage, and expectations are high that the four-time continental champions will make their mark in a group featuring Cote D'Ivoire, Greece and Colombia.

Their Italian coach has sprung few surprises in his selection, with only Yoshito Okubo's inclusion – having not been picked

by Zaccheroni for over two years - raising any questions, with the former Real Mallorca and VfL Wolfsburg man having impressed over the last 18 months since joining Kawasaki Frontale.

Having reached the knockout rounds twice – Japan were also eliminated in the Round of 16 on home soil by Turkey in 2002 – the goal will be a spot in the quarter-finals and the Samurai Blue will have great confidence in a squad that boasts a good balance of youth and experience.



Formation 4-2-3-1



Makoto Hasebe

Japan captain Makoto Hasebe led the Samurai Blue to the AFC Asian Cup title in Qatar in 2011 and remains central to everything at the heart of Alberto Zaccheroni's team. An astute passer whose play dictates the tempo of the team, Hasebe missed the latter stage of the Bundesliga season due to injury, but should be ready for action by the time the FIFA World Cup kicks off.



Keisuke Honda

Keisuke Honda emerged as Japan's talisman at the 2010 FIFA World Cup finals in South Africa, scoring in the wins over Cameroon and Denmark that saw the nation progress to the knockout phase of the tournament for the first time on foreign soil. A gifted presence in attack, Honda's goals were key to Japan qualifying for Brazil 2014.



Shinji Kagawa

Manchester United midfielder Shinji Kagawa will travel to Brazil seeking redemption after a disappointing season that has seen him slip down the pecking order at Old Trafford. Kagawa missed out on a place in the Japan squad for South Africa, but will be keen to not only make up for that missed opportunity but to underline his genuine class after a difficult two seasons since leaving Borussia Dortmund.

World Cup Schedule in Group C

June 14		Japan v Cote D'Ivoire		Recife
June 19		Japan v Greece		Natal
June 24		Japan v Colombia		Cuiaba

Squad

Eiji Kawashima (Standard Liege, Belgium)	Hotaru Yamaguchi (Cerezo Osaka)
Shusaku Nishikawa (Urawa Red Diamonds)	Yasuhiro Endo (Gamba Osaka)
Shuichi Gonda (FC Tokyo)	Toshihiro Aoyama (Sanfrecce Hiroshima)
Yuto Nagatomo (Inter Milan, Italy)	Hiroshi Kiyotake (Nuremberg, Germany)
Maya Yoshida (Southampton, England)	Keisuke Honda (AC Milan, Italy)
Yasuyuki Konno (Gamba Osaka)	Shinji Kagawa (Manchester United, England)
Masahiko Inoha (Jubilo Iwata)	Shinji Okazaki (Mainz 05, Germany)
Masato Morishige (FC Tokyo)	Yuya Osako (1860 Munich, Germany)
Atsuto Uchida (Schalke 04, Germany)	Yoichiro Kakitani (Cerezo Osaka)
Hiroki Sakai (Hannover 96, Germany)	Yoshito Okubo (Kawasaki Frontale)
Gotoku Sakai (Stuttgart, Germany)	Manabu Saito (Yokohama F. Marinos)
Makoto Hasebe (Eintracht Frankfurt, Germany)	

GENERATION NEXT

AUSTRALIA TRAVEL TO BRAZIL WITH A YOUNG SQUAD AND WITH AT LEAST ONE EYE ON THE FUTURE AS THE COUNTRY PREPARES TO HOST THE AFC ASIAN CUP EARLY NEXT YEAR. COACH ANGE POSTECOGLOU SHARES HIS THOUGHTS WITH AFC QUARTERLY BEFORE MEETING SPAIN, THE NETHERLANDS AND CHILE IN GROUP B.

By: Simon Hill Photos: World Sport Group/Getty Images

Time has all but run out on Australia's 'Golden Generation', the band of gifted players whose talents were honed overseas and who hit the heights of the Round of 16 at the FIFA World Cup in

Germany in 2006.

The international careers of Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell ended several years ago, while the conclusion came more recently for the likes of Mark Schwarzer and Lucas Neill.

Only Tim Cahill and Mark Bresciano of that fabled group of players remain

as new coach Ange Postecoglou builds for the future, naming a squad for Brazil that leans as heavily on the domestic A-League as it does on the foreign clubs Australian players have traditionally made their home.

After years of wondering when the regeneration of the Socceroos would begin, Australia's national team is set to begin its rebirth in Cuiaba on June 13 as Postecoglou's team kick off their FIFA World Cup 2014 campaign.

Q: How difficult was the process of whittling down your squad for the World Cup?







A: I don't know if it was difficult - once I had made my mind up on the direction I wanted to take, that made it clear. I had clear criteria - so the rest of it took care of itself.

Q: Some of those who haven't made it have been rather vocal in their criticism of you - does that disappoint you?

A: Not really - I guess there's an understanding that I have made decisions that have affected people on a personal basis. I've been coaching long enough to know it is part of the job, and it's my responsibility to make those decisions. Some take it well, others don't.

Q: Was the omission of Lucas Neill the hardest selection to make?

A: Most definitely. He has had a very distinguished career, and he believed he still had something to offer. I wanted to communicate my decision on a personal basis rather than publicly - I did that, so at least he had that understanding as to why.

Q: The World Cup is very close now - is your feeling one of excitement, or

apprehension?

A: Excitement definitely - we can't lose sight of the fact that it's going to be a fantastic experience for everyone involved. It's a great tournament for our nation - and we're not at the stage of our development where we can take World Cup's for granted. From a personal perspective, although I've been busy in the last six months, it's not been in a true football sense - I'm really looking forward to getting out on the training paddock and preparing.

Q: Four years ago, Australia lost their opening World Cup game 4-0 to Germany, and were hammered in the media - how anxious are you to avoid that scenario against Chile?

A: That's a fair call. Regardless of your expectations, that first game is always the important one - a good display and result eases the pressure. It can work to our advantage though - Chile are in the same boat, and they are expected to beat us. The pressure will be on all the teams.

Q: Is it your intention to attack?

A: Definitely. I believe in that style of football - my intention is to be successful, and I think that's the way to do it. You have to respect the opposition of course, but I want us to be a team that is proactive.

Q: Injuries have really impacted upon the squad - Mile Jedinak the latest under a bit of a cloud - are you tempted to wrap him in cotton wool ahead of the tournament?

A: I don't think you can do that - Mile had a setback, but I think we'd have given him a break anyway. I don't think it will disrupt his preparation too much. He's had an enormous English Premier League season, so he probably needs a break. The rest though, are all in decent condition to work pretty hard over the next period. With such a young group, I think that serves two purposes - to make training competitive, but also to ensure we do not miss anyone along the way. I have an idea of the core of the team - but there will still be some competition for places.

Q: When you look at the players who haven't made the squads of the likes of



Brazil - Ronaldinho, Kaka, Lucas - does that give a fair reflection of what Australia is up against?

A: I am under no illusions as to what we'll face - and this is where the excitement comes from. We'll be testing ourselves against the very best - and we're right amongst it. That's what we love about this game.

Q: Your former international team-mate, Paul Wade, said publicly that Australia are going to "get smashed" in Brazil - does that sort of defeatist talk annoy you?

A: I know Wadey pretty well - I played with him, and he'll be cheering us on come Brazil, don't worry about that. But we understand that expectations are low...and I hope that's true of the opposition too. If people want to underestimate us, that's fine.

Q: Of the other Asian nations, who is best placed to make an impact?

A: I think it's interesting that the Asian nations are going through a similar regeneration phase to us - the Koreans are taking only one player over the age of 30. So probably for this World Cup it's the Japanese.

I still believe we're not far off having an Asian team make a massive impact on the World Cup - hopefully over the next couple of tournaments.

Q: Moving onto the Asian Cup draw, which handed you another tough group - were Korea Republic the team you didn't want?

A: It's tough, but we want to do well - and being at home, that means trying to win it. To win trophies, you have to face the best. If we can get through the group strongly, it will mean we've played very well, and that could set us up really well for the knockout phase.

Q: Do the performances of the A-League clubs in the AFC Champions League show that club football in Australia is improving?

A: No doubt. You've seen the progress of our clubs this year - and especially when you balance them against the conditions we face, the salary cap, having finals matches at the same time. More and more we are embracing the AFC Champions League as an important competition. If we see the same improvement next year, then we have the potential to

become the best in our region.

Q: In a nutshell, what is success for Australia over the next nine months?

A: The immediate one is the World Cup - an opportunity for us to get people excited about the direction we are heading in with great performances. If we do that, we can go into the Asian Cup to try and win the trophy.





FIFA World Cup Record

Qualified: 1974, 2006, 2010

Best Performance: Round of 16 - 2006

Best Result: 2006 - 3-1 v Japan

Wins: 2 **Draws:** 3 **Losses:** 5



Australia are making their third straight appearance at the FIFA World Cup finals, with the Socceroos securing their place in Brazil with victory over Iraq in Sydney in their final qualifying match last June.

Ange Postecoglou was named head coach in October last year following the removal of Holger Osieck, who was sacked following back-to-back 6-0 losses against Brazil and

France in friendly fixtures last year, and the former Brisbane Roar coach has made sweeping changes.

Veteran goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer, Australia's most capped player, announced his retirement within hours of Postecoglou's appointment while former AFC Player of the Year Sasa Ognenovski and ex-captain Lucas Neill were squeezed out of the squad.

In their place has come a new generation of players towards whom the Australians

will look for the future, with the FIFA World Cup the first step along a road that leads through the finals of the AFC Asian Cup, which Australia will host in January next year.

Having being drawn in a difficult group alongside holders Spain, 2010 finalists the Netherlands and South American powerhouses Chile, the Socceroos will hope the experience of Tim Cahill, Mark Bresciano and Mile Jedinak coupled with the youthful promise of Tommy Oar and Mat Ryan can ensure a positive outcome in Brazil.



Formation 4-3-3



Mile Jedinak



Central midfielder Mile Jedinak goes into the FIFA World Cup finals off the back of an impressive season in the English Premier League with Crystal Palace, where his form was one of the key reasons the London club avoided relegation. Hard working and a tough tackler, Jedinak came to prominence during the AFC Asian Cup in 2011 and has been a fixture for the Socceroos since.







Tim Cahill



Veteran striker Tim Cahill will be appearing at his third straight FIFA World Cup and he remains one of the team's most potent threats in attack, with his impressive aerial ability and talents on the ground. Cahill claimed Australia's goal scoring record earlier in the year and the New York Red Bulls star will be keen to add to his tally in Brazil.



World Cup Schedule in Group B

June 13		Australia v Chile		Cuiaba
June 18		Australia v Netherlands		Porto Alegre
June 23		Australia v Spain		Curitiba

Mat Ryan



Goalkeeper Mat Ryan has grown in stature since leaving Central Coast Mariners in early 2013 to join Club Brugge in Belgium, with his assured performances between the posts earning him the Belgium Pro League Goalkeeper of the Year award in his first full season and a starting berth under Ange Postecoglou following the retirement of Mark Schwarzer.

Squad

Mathew Ryan (Club Brugge, Belgium)	James Holland (Austria Vienna, Austria)
Mitchell Langerak (Borussia Dortmund, Germany)	Mile Jedinak (Crystal Palace, England)
Eugene Galekovic (Adelaide United)	Mark Milligan (Melbourne Victory)
Jason Davidson (Heracles Almelo, Netherlands)	Dario Vidosic (Sion, Switzerland)
Matthew Spiranovic (Western Sydney Wanderers)	Matt McKay (Brisbane Roar)
Ivan Franjic (Brisbane Roar)	James Troisi (Atalanta, Italy)
Bailey Wright (Preston North End, England)	Massimo Luongo (Swindon, England)
Ryan McGowan (Shandong Luneng, China)	Tim Cahill (New York Red Bulls, United States)
Alex Wilkinson (Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, Korea Republic)	Matthew Leckie (FSV Frankfurt 1899, Germany)
Oliver Bozanic (Luzern, Switzerland)	Tommy Oar (Utrecht, Netherlands)
Mark Bresciano (Al Gharafa, Qatar)	Ben Halloran (Fortuna Duesseldorf, Germany)
	Adam Taggart (Newcastle Jets)

NO FEAR NO REGRET

LONG REGARDED AS ONE OF ASIA'S GREATEST PLAYERS, WHEN HONG MYUNG-BO WAS NAMED AS HEAD COACH OF THE KOREA REPUBLIC NATIONAL TEAM HE WAS SEEN AS FULFILLING HIS DESTINY. BUT, WITH JUST 12 MONTHS TO BUILD A TEAM FOR BRAZIL, HONG TELLS OF HIS HOPES FOR THIS SUMMER'S TOURNAMENT AND BEYOND.

By: Michael Church Photos: World Sport Group

The image is one of the most iconic in Asian football: Hong Myung-bo wheeling away, arms stretched out, a look of sheer delight on his face as he celebrates netting the penalty that took Korea Republic into the semi-finals of the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

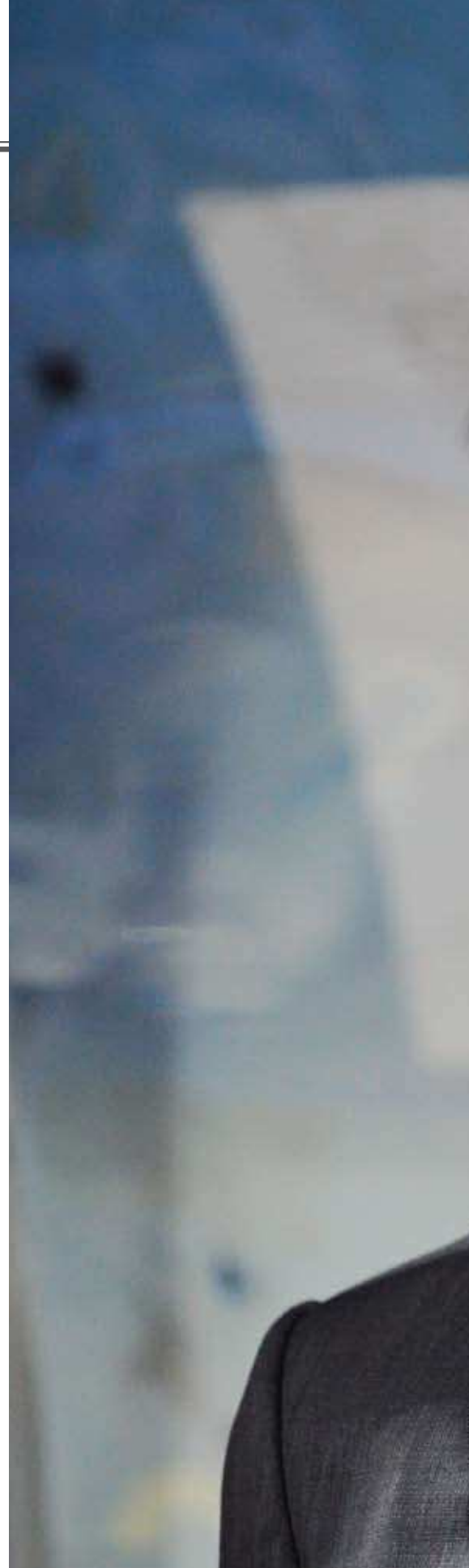
For millions of fans in Korea, and throughout Asia, it was an historic moment. The shootout win over Spain the first time an Asian team had progressed to the last four of the game's greatest event, and the man pulling the trigger on that

decisive penalty was, fittingly, one of the continent's finest ever players.

Twelve years on from captaining Guus Hiddink's side to a remarkable fourth place, Hong is back in the unremitting glare of the FIFA World Cup spotlight; but where once he was calling the shots on the field, the 45-year-old now has an altogether more challenging task at hand.

Less than a year ago, Hong was handed the reins of the Korea Republic national team – a position many felt his destiny – after Choi Kang-hee stepped down having secured qualification for an Asian record eighth straight FIFA World Cup.

Hong had been the overwhelming







favourite to take over, not just for sentimental reasons but because he had steered the country to the bronze medal at the Olympic Games in London a year before.

That success was the latest step in a steady, upward trajectory both for Hong as a coach and the impressive young generation of players he has led since serving as head coach of the country's U-20 team; the same group of players he believes is bound for a bright future.

"Based on my experience, I think this is a golden generation," says Hong of the squad he will take to Brazil, where the Koreans will meet Russia, Algeria and Belgium in Group H.

"After the 2012 Olympics, they developed a lot and it's going to be the same in Brazil because, if they do their best at the World Cup, they will improve a lot. I strongly believe they are a golden generation who will go on to represent Korea for the next five, six or seven years."

Brazil 2014, Hong believes, is the next step towards creating a dynasty. The aim: to fashion a team that can make a mark both regionally and globally, much as Hong did himself during an enviable playing career.

His status as an icon of the game continues to loom large over Korean football. As someone who represented his nation 136 times, including at four FIFA World Cup Finals and as captain in 2002, it is little surprise.

But it is as a coach with a burgeoning reputation that Hong promises to make an even greater impact as he continues his upward trajectory on the sidelines after a patient and studious apprenticeship.

Having retired from playing in 2004, he worked as an assistant to Dick Advocaat at the 2006 finals in Germany, before serving alongside Pim Verbeek at the AFC Asian Cup a year later.

Hong then took Korea's team to the FIFA U-20 World Cup in 2009 and led the nation to the bronze medal at the Asian Games in Guangzhou in 2010.

Success in London followed two years later, and then came the call to take on the biggest job of all. Few were shocked, except Hong himself.

"The first time I heard the news I was surprised and at the time I was thinking that, regardless of who it is, a good coach has to be appointed to be coach of the Korean national

team," he says.

"When I received the offer, I was assistant coach to Guus Hiddink in Anzhi Makhachkala so, on one side I was surprised, but on the other hand I was happy.

"That was the third offer I had had from the Korea Football Association to be national team coach. I thought one day I have to take the challenge and maybe there would not be another time to be national team coach. It's a job everyone wants and I thought it was the time to take it.

"But I don't think there's any relationship between the Olympic team and the national team. After having the success with the Olympic team, I didn't think the national team was the next step. I didn't think there was a relationship.

"The most important thing for the national team head coach is ability and experience, and performance as well. A lot of people were thinking that I would be given the national team job because the bronze medal at the Olympics was the best result in the history of Korean football, and it's true that there is a lot of expectation that I could perform better after the bronze medal. But the most important



thing is to do my best from the beginning, from the first step."

The Olympics continue to be the backdrop against which coach Hong goes into the FIFA World Cup finals. He has named 12 of the 18 players he took to London in his 23-man squad for Brazil with only five players – goalkeeper Jung Sung-ryung, Ki Sung-yeung, Park Chu-yong, Lee Chung-yong and Kim Bo-kyung – surviving from Huh Jung-moo's squad that reached the Round of 16 in South Africa in 2010.

"When I was appointed head coach, I only had one year until the World Cup and, from the day I was appointed, I started to compare all of the players," he says.

"But I found that the players who played in the Olympics had improved their ability a lot. So, generally, I thought the Olympic players were better and that's why I picked them."

Perhaps it's not surprising that Hong chose to select players he knows and trusts; not only did a dozen play under him two years ago, but several – including Koo Ja-cheol and Yun Suk-yong – were part of the team Hong took to the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Egypt, where the Koreans reached the quarter-finals.

After the struggle to qualify under Choi with a squad featuring many of Korea's old guard, the time had come to begin building an entirely new team with a philosophy that sees Hong borrow from the huge number of influences he has absorbed during his career.

"We have very strong opponents so I think in order to compete at the World Cup having a lot of pace in the team is important, especially in terms of transition," he says. "It is very important. I think the players in the squad have got excellent talent, so based on those facts, that's why I picked them."

"My strategy is based on the players. I know we have to analyse what the players can do best in each situation. Over the last two competitions – the under 20 World Cup and the Olympics – I experienced how to compete against other teams and coaches at world level and, based on that experience, my tactics are to make the team very compact and we will put our opponents under a lot of pressure."

Hong and his team will be under pressure of a different kind at home, with the Korean public expecting a lengthy run at the finals off the back of reaching the Round of 16 in

South Africa – where they were eliminated by Uruguay – and the performance at the Olympics. But the head coach just hopes his players can go to the World Cup and perform free of fear.

"At the moment in Korea, the fans here are saying I'll be happy reaching the quarter-finals, but that's their perspective," says Hong.

"Of course, the best thing would be to fulfill their expectations, however I think the most important thing is that we do our best. I want the team to do their best and have no regrets after the World Cup. Our team could qualify for the knockout stages, or not, but the most important thing is to play without regret."

"When I was a player, the World Cup started with fear and it ended with regret. But if I look back at my experience, there's no need to fear the World Cup. It's directly related to confidence."

"At the same time, from a tactical and psychological perspective the players have to be prepared. No one knows how far we can go, but me and my team want to do our best at the World Cup and finish the World Cup without regret."



FIFA World Cup Record

Qualified: 1954, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010

Best Performance: Fourth place -2002

Best Result: 2002 - 0-0 (won 5-3 on penalties) v Spain

Wins: 5 **Draws:** 8 **Losses:** 15



Hong Myung-bo will take a youthful squad to the finals of the FIFA World Cup as he seeks to build on Korea Republic's success at the Olympic Games in London two years ago.

Then, Hong steered the country's U-23 team to their first-ever medal in the men's competition, defeating Japan in the third place play-off match to record Asia's best performance at the Olympics since the

Japanese finished third in Mexico City in 1968.

Hong was appointed head coach of the full national side last year, replacing Choi Kang-hee, who had secured Korea's place in the finals for an eighth straight tournament, and he has sought to increase the pace and energy of the team.

Only five players remain from the squad that reached the Round of 16 in South Africa four years ago, with striker Park Chu-yong gaining selection despite struggling in

recent months with injury.

Ki Sung-yueng sits at the heart of the midfield, controlling the team's tempo, while Son Heung-min has become a fixture in the side under Hong after two impressive seasons in Germany.

In a group featuring Russia, Belgium and Algeria, the Koreans will be hoping to advance to the knockout phase for a second World Cup in a row and, from there, build on their showing in 2010.



Formation 4-2-3-1



Kim Young-gwon



Central defender Kim Young-gwon has been a key part of the Guangzhou Evergrande side that has dominated club football in the continent over the last two seasons. Club coach Marcello Lippi has hailed Kim as one of the finest defenders in Asia.



Park Chu-young

Park Chu-young the opportunity to appear at a second straight FIFA World Cup, but the former Monaco forward was selected by Hong Myung-bo, as he was as an overage player for the Olympic Games in 2012.

Injury and a lack of form looked set to deny



Ki Sung-yueng



One of only five players to survive from the squad that represented Korea Republic in South Africa four years ago, Ki Seung-yueng remains the fulcrum around which the rest of the team pivots. An elegant presence in the centre of midfield, he also presents a threat from set pieces.

World Cup Schedule in Group H

June 17		Korea Republic v Russia		Cuiaba
June 22		Korea Republic v Algeria		Porto Alegre
June 26		Korea Republic v Belgium		Sao Paulo

Squad

Jung Sung-ryeong (Suwon Bluewings)	Ha Dae-sung (Beijing Guoan, China)
Kim Seung-gyu (Ulsan Hyundai)	Han Kook-young (Kashiwa Reysol, Japan)
Lee Bum-young (Busan I'Park)	Park Jung-woo (Guangzhou R&F, China)
Park Joo-ho (Mainz, Germany)	Son Heung-min (Bayer Leverkusen, Germany)
Yun Suk-young (QPR, England)	Kim Bo-kyung (Cardiff City, Wales)
Kim Young-gwon (Guangzhou Evergrande, China)	Lee Chung-yong (Bolton Wanderers, England)
Hwang Seok-ho (Sanfrecce Hiroshima, Japan)	Ji Dong-won (Augsburg, Germany)
Hong Jeong-ho (Augsburg, Germany)	Koo Ja-cheol (Mainz, Germany)
Kwak Tae-hwi (Al Hilal, Saudi Arabia)	Lee Keun-ho (Sangju Sangmu)
Lee Yong (Ulsan Hyundai)	Park Chu-young (Arsenal, England)
Kim Chang-soo (Kashiwa Reysol, Japan)	Kim Shin-wook (Ulsan Hyundai)
Ki Sung-yueng (Sunderland, England)	

AGAINST ALL ODDS

FORMER REAL MADRID
COACH CARLOS
QUEIROZ HEADS TO HIS
THIRD FIFA WORLD CUP
HOPING TO OVERCOME
THE ODDS AND TAKE
IRAN TO THE SECOND
ROUND FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN THEIR
HISTORY, DESPITE THE
OBSTACLES IN
THEIR PATH.

By: Michael Church Photos: World Sport Group

For every team travelling to Brazil, preparation is key. For the major nations, those who have most, if not all, of their squad featuring in the game's leading leagues, rest and recuperation after a grueling season are as important as the tactical and technical work done in the build-up to the finals.

Carlos Queiroz, however, has a different problem; the Portuguese coach goes to Brazil wishing he could spend more time with his players in an effort to

achieve the best result possible at Iran's fourth FIFA World Cup appearance.

"The difference with coaching in Iran, or in Asia, is that we need more time to prepare to have the opportunity to do well at the World Cup," says the man who took South Africa to the 2002 finals before leading his native Portugal to the second round - where they lost to eventual champions Spain - four years ago. "The more opportunities we have to work with the players the better because it allows us to prepare for international games.

"When everyone is working under the FIFA rules, it is difficult, but at the end







of the day this is the reality. The FIFA rules don't help the developing nations to compete against the best teams in the world. It's not enough for us to prepare in the same way or over the same time period that the Germans or the Spanish team do.

"It's very clear to me that we have two types of countries in world football: there are those who have players playing with the top clubs and who don't need so much time together and there are those who should spend more time together as a national team.

"When you have the same FIFA rules for everybody there is an imbalance between these two groups and then the gap between the top nations and everyone else grows bigger and bigger."

Queiroz knows the odds are stacked against his team in Brazil, where Team Melli will face the daunting task of taking on Lionel Messi's Argentina as well as Nigeria and Bosnia-Herzegovina as they seek a first-ever appearance in the knockout phase of the World Cup.

But their status as underdogs will not diminish their desire to make an impact at the finals.

"We had to try to put a preparation programme together to allow us to compete against other national teams," says Queiroz, whose team finalised their build-up to Brazil 2014 with a 10-day camp in Austria before leaving for Sao Paulo.

"We are going to go to Brazil to try to accomplish the goals we have in our mind.

"We are going to be going there to do our best, to compete with honour and with dignity and to make the Iranian fans proud of our team. That's the most important thing. When you play against some of the best teams in the world, this is what you have to do.

"Argentina are one of the best teams in the world, Nigeria have many players playing in big clubs in Europe and Bosnia are a good side too, so we need to go there and compete with pride.

"I think there is a clear situation that Argentina is clearly the favourite in the group, then you have two candidates for second position with Nigeria and Bosnia, and then you have us as outsiders.

"As outsiders, we are going to play a cat and mouse game and wait for our opportunities, and when those opportunities

come we have to take them."

To achieve success in the long run, Queiroz believes federations need to take a view to preparing for major tournaments that goes much further than the basic regulations that are in place.

He is an advocate, too, for Asian nations finding ways to develop the game in their own way, rather than borrowing methods from other nations and other confederations.

"The difference in the level between Europe, Africa and Asia is very high," he says.

"We need to think about the development of football in each country and we can't stand behind FIFA rules when it comes to players' availability. We can't fall into that trap. It's the responsibility of each federation to put in place the best preparation for the team and they must try to do the best for their national team.

"If you stand behind the FIFA rules, you won't go anywhere. You have to put together a long-term development plan and, secondly, you can't just copy Europe in coach development, youth development and



the systems you put in place. The systems and the methods you put in place and the organisation you use must be something that works for Asian players. If you copy, you won't go anywhere. It needs to be done using innovative methods.

"For the clubs, the AFC Champions League was more important and the Asian Football Confederation scheduled the competition to run until May, so because of the schedule it was difficult to do the preparation that we needed. But at the end of the day, it's a problem for all of us. The preparation programme is the same for us, and for Germany and for Spain. The difference is, they have many years of work in place building up to this and we don't.

"But we have a strong belief and we will try to do the best that we can and compete with pride and honour, now is not the time to talk about coach education or development. You don't do that so close to the World Cup."

Since taking over as head coach, Queiroz has sought to add strength and depth to his squad by integrating players either born or raised outside Iran to a squad made up predominantly of locally based players.

Fulham wide man Ashkan Dejagah has made a major impact since making his debut for Iran in February 2012 against Qatar while Daniel Davari has become the first choice goalkeeper and Reza Ghoochenejad the team's most potent striker.

The coach, though, believes finding the right blend is more important than packing the side with overseas-based players.

"There's no doubt the players playing international football, and playing in European football, they bring important talents to the team; they have more international experience, they have better preparation and have better fitness compared to the locally based players," he says.

"But my only criteria for the selection of players are quality and experience. I want players who can bring good technical qualities to the team.

"We want to create the best environment and the best squad we can, and it doesn't matter if they are local players or from abroad. The four or five players we have who are based in Europe, they are better prepared from a physical and mental point of view and they have great qualities."

Despite Queiroz's concerns, the 61-year-old is setting his sights on making the dreams of Iran's fans come true. The country's record at the World Cup is disappointing: in three previous appearances, Iran have won one match – against the United States in 1998 – drawn twice and lost their remaining six fixtures.

And yet fans in the football crazy nation crave not only another win, but a place in the knockout stages of the tournament.

"There are a lot of people who feel that it is realistic that Iran can go to the second round," he says.

"That is being said all over the place and I don't see anything wrong in having a dream and we will work hard in every game and in every minute to try to make that dream a reality.

"We must play with one thing in mind, to try to do that and I see nothing wrong with that.

"We are going to play against three of the best teams in the world and we qualified with the expectation that we would play against opponents who would be amongst the best in the world."



FIFA World Cup Record

Qualified: 1978, 1998, 2006

Best Performance: Group Stages - 1978, 1998 & 2006)

Best Result: 1998 - 2-1 v United States

Wins: 1 **Draws:** 2 **Losses:** 6



Iran go to their fourth FIFA World Cup finals still looking for what has so far been an elusive place in the knockout stages of the game's greatest event.

With just one win in their previous three appearances – an historic victory over the United States in Lyon during France 1998

– Carlos Queiroz's side will be aiming to turn promise into results in a group featuring Argentina, Nigeria and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

With Lionel Messi's Argentina the favourites to win the group, the battle will be

on for second place with all three sides evenly matched on paper going into the tournament.

Queiroz has worked hard enhancing his squad since taking over following the AFC Asian Cup finals in Qatar in 2011, when the Iranians once again exited the competition at the quarter-final stage at the hands of Korea Republic.

Overseas-born or raised players such as goalkeeper Daniel Davari, midfielder Ashkan Dejagah and forward Reza

Ghoochenijhad have become vital to the team and, allied to home-grown stars such as Javad Nekounam and Andranik Teymourian, the Iranians have the talent to make an impact in Brazil.

Ghoochenijhad, in particular, has delivered a much-needed cutting edge to the team that had previously struggled in front of goal, which relied too often on being bailed out by Nekounam with his customary all-action displays.



Formation 4-2-3-1



Andranik
Teymourian



Andranik Teymourian's partnership in the centre of midfield with Javad Nekounam was the key ingredient for Iran's qualification for the FIFA World Cup finals, and it remains vital to their hopes of success in Brazil. The former Bolton Wanderers midfielder brings industry and craft to the heart of the Iran midfield and can contribute the occasional spectacular strike from long range.



Reza
Ghoochannejhad

with Iran during qualifying for the FIFA World Cup finals, scoring three times as Team Melli booked their place in Brazil. Quick and skillful, the Charlton Athletic forward will use his pace to unsettle opposition defences. Known as 'Gucci', he represented the Netherlands at youth level.

Netherlands-raised striker Reza Ghoochannejhad burst on to the scene



World Cup Schedule in Group F

June 16		Iran v Nigeria		Curitiba
June 21		Iran v Argentina		Belo Horizonte
June 25		Iran v Bosnia-Herzegovina		Salvador



Javad
Nekounam



Veteran midfielder and Team Melli captain Javad Nekounam remains the fulcrum of the side, controlling everything from the centre of the pitch and chipping in regularly with vital goals. Nekounam's experience of playing in Europe, having spent several seasons in La Liga with Osasuna, will be key as Iran aim for a place in the knockout rounds for the first time in their history.

Squad

Daniel Davari (Grasshopper Club Zurich, Switzerland)	Mehrdad Pouladi (Persepolis)
Alireza Haghighi (Rubin Kazan, Russia)	Javad Nekounam (Kuwait SC, Kuwait)
Rahman Ahmadi (Sepahan)	Andranik Teymourian (Esteghlal)
Khosro Heydari (Esteghlal)	Reza Haghighi (Persepolis)
Hossein Mahini (Persepolis)	Ghasem Hadadifar (Zob Ahan)
Steven Beitashour (Vancouver Whitecaps, Canada)	Bakhtiyar Rahmani (Foolad)
Pejman Montazeri (Umm Salal, Qatar)	Alireza Jahanbakhsh (NEC Nijmegen, Netherlands)
Jalal Hosseini (Persepolis)	Ashkan Dejagah (Fulham, England)
Amir Hossein Sadeghi (Esteghlal)	Masoud Shojaei (Las Palmas, Spain)
Ahmad Alenemeh (Naft)	Reza Ghoochannejhad (Charlton, England)
Hashem Beikzadeh (Esteghlal)	Karim Ansarifard (Tractorsazi Tabriz)
Ehsan Haji Safi (Sepahan)	



THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE

RAVSHAN IRMATOV
WILL MAKE HIS SECOND
FIFA WORLD CUP
APPEARANCE THIS
SUMMER IN BRAZIL AFTER
THE FOUR-TIME AFC
REFEREE OF THE YEAR
OFFICIATED THE OPENING
GAME IN SOUTH AFRICA
FOUR YEARS EARLIER.

Interview: Behzod Nazarov • Photo: World Sport Group

Uzbekistan's heartbreaking play-off defeat by Jordan last year denied the Central Asian nation the chance to continue their bid for maiden appearance at the FIFA World Cup.

But this summer in Brazil, Uzbekistan will be represented by four-time AFC Referee of the Year Ravshan Irmatov. The 36-year-old will be joined in Brazil by compatriot Abdukhamidullo Rasulov

as well as Bakhadyr Kochkarov from Kyrgyzstan, who are both part of his regular team of officials.

Kochkarov joined Irmatov at the 2010 FIFA World Cup as the team took charge of the opening game between hosts South Africa and Mexico.

"To be at the World Cup is like a trophy for each referee. Teams play for participation in the final stage over the years and during qualifying tournaments. Referees also have the same process," says Irmatov.







"There are a lot of high level referees all over the world. It is not easy to reach it. I cried from happiness when I knew about my participation in the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This is also what happened for 2014."

The honour of taking charge of the opening game of a FIFA World Cup completed Irmatov's rise through the ranks having been added to the list of FIFA referees just seven years earlier.

"I began football from my childhood. I began to play for Gazalkent club, but I injured my ankle and that finished my playing career. My father was a coach of the youth players and I helped him at that time during training. Once, my father offered me a chance to referee a match between some of the youth teams, and I did it," says Irmatov.

"After the game he told me to become a referee. He said I had a good chance to become a referee. He had spoken about it a lot of times before also, so I began my refereeing career after that day."

Irmatov soon progressed through the ranks and took charge of his first domestic game in Uzbekistan in 2001, with continental recognition following in the shape of the matches in the group stage of the 2002/03 AFC Champions League.

"I refereed some youth team matches and then I wrote an official letter to become a referee. I began to work in Uzbekistan

championship matches," he says. "At international level I went to Dalian in China for my first game as the home team played in the AFC Champions League."

At the end of 2002 Irmatov was recommended to join the list of FIFA referees for the following year having impressed during an Uzbekistan league game between Pakhtakor and Sogdiana in Tashkent.

"It is a very proud thing for every referee," says Irmatov of being added to the FIFA list. "You serve in these games in the name of your country or your continent so you should be ready for all situations during these games."

Appearances at the 2004 AFC Asian Cup, as well as FIFA U-17 and U-20 World Cups in 2007 followed before Irmatov took charge of the final between Manchester United and Liga Deportiva Universitaria de Quito at the 2008 FIFA Club World Cup.

His achievements saw Irmatov named AFC Referee of the Year for the first time in 2008, with subsequent recognition following in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

"I can say honestly I had no any idea about becoming the best referee. I just wanted to show good refereeing and perform well. That has been my main target from the beginning of my career," says Irmatov.

"When the AFC announced my name I had so many emotions. I had the same emotion when I received it for the second, third and fourth time, just like it was the first time."

The award at the end of 2010 followed Irmatov becoming the first referee from Uzbekistan to officiate at the FIFA World Cup, a moment which was made even more special as he led out the two teams for the opening game at Johannesburg's Soccer City.

"It was unexpected for me as I was the youngest amongst all the referees. When I knew about it, I was surprised. To work at the FIFA World Cup is the dream for every referee. I had the opening match of the World Cup," says Irmatov.

"I think it shows the trust in Asian referees that I had this opportunity. If you work hard, you have a chance to become the best. We showed Asian referees could work well in important games. There is no border where are you from – Asia, Africa or Oceania. I felt great happiness on that day."

Irmatov and his team also took charge of the group stage games between England and Algeria as well as Greece and Argentina.

The team were also appointed for the quarter-final between Argentina



Ravshan Irmatov

Nationality:
Uzbekistan

DOB:
09/08/1977

Position:
Referee

Honours:
AFC Referee of the Year – 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011
FIFA Club World Cup Final Referee – 2008, 2011
FIFA World Cup Referee – 2010
AFC Asian Cup Final Referee – 2011
AFF Suzuki Cup Final Referee – 2012
AFC Champions League Final Referee – 2013

and Germany and the semi-final involving Uruguay and the Netherlands, but the trio missed out on the final.

"If I was disappointed by missing out on the final it wouldn't be good because I refereed five matches in the World Cup. I served in the quarter and semi-finals," he says.

"When I was at a FIFA seminar in Zurich in 2007 for the first time, some referees told me I had no chance of going to the FIFA World Cup. I continued to work every day with my training process.

"Going to the World Cup and refereeing five matches were the fruits of our hard work."

Irmatov, though, did not have to wait long to take charge of a major final as he was appointed for the last game of the 2011 AFC Asian Cup between Japan and Australia in Doha, although that had only been made possible following Uzbekistan's elimination in the semi-finals.

"I remember Uzbekistan's match in the semi-final. I asked our instructor if I could go to the stadium to see the game. Unfortunately, Uzbekistan lost. If the national team had won that game it would have been a happy day for fans in Uzbekistan. Many people like football in my country," he says.

"When I was told I would serve in the final, I was happy and felt a great honour. The final of the Asian Cup is the dream of any referee from Asia."

The finals of the 2011 FIFA Club World Cup between Barcelona and Santos, the bronze medal play-off between Japan and Korea Republic at the 2012 Olympic Games and the second leg of the 2012 AFF Suzuki Cup final between Thailand and Singapore soon followed as Irmatov's impressive resume grew stronger still.

Irmatov, though, has not had it all his own way throughout his career following his much-publicised error in the match between Brazil and Italy at the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup as he awarded Giorgio Chiellini's goal despite having a split second earlier appeared to award Italy a penalty.

"The referee's role in football is very important. Sometimes fans or the media forget about the human factor. Referees make mistakes sometimes. You can't do any work without mistakes," he says.

"Even the best players in the world make mistakes. Fans should understand that. I think referees should not pay attention to what fans say after mistakes. He has to forget his mistakes, but to analyse it and to prepare for the next match.

"Referees have a difficult job. You have to decide right after one or two seconds of each situation. Football is very quick now as the ball goes from one end to the other in four or five seconds."

That ended the tournament for Irmatov and

his team, but after they took charge of the first leg of the 2013 AFC Champions League final between FC Seoul and Guangzhou Evergrande, the Uzbek trio will be back in Brazil this summer with the AFC Asian Cup 2015 in Australia also just around the corner.

"The proudest achievement of my career is the opening match of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. It is the dream for each referee," says Irmatov. "My hopes are to show a good performance at the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil and then go to AFC Asian Cup 2015 in Australia."

2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil Referees – Asian Zone

REFEREES

Nams	Country	International Since
Ravshan Irmatov		2003
Alireza Faghani		2008
Yuichi Nishimura		2004
Nawaf Shukralla		2007
Benjamin Williams		2005



MOVING FORWARD

SAUDI ARABIA ARE ONE OF ASIA'S MOST SUCCESSFUL NATIONS AND, WITH A NEW PRESIDENT AT THE HELM OF THE FEDERATION, THE GREEN FALCONS ARE SET TO SOAR EVEN HIGHER.

By: Michael Church Photos: World Sport Group/Courtesy of Saudi Arabian Football Federation

Saeed Owairan's mesmerizing run through the heart of the Belgian team will always remain a touch-stone moment for Saudi Arabian football; the day the team from the Middle East announced their arrival on the biggest stage of all, delivered with one of the game's greatest ever goals.

Twenty years ago this summer, Saudi Arabia became the first Asian nation to reach the knockout phase of the FIFA World Cup since DPR Korea advanced to the quarter-finals in England in 1966. With a team packed with young, exciting talent, the future belonged to the Green Falcons.

The run to the second round in the United States – where they lost 3-1 to Sweden after emerging from a group

featuring Belgium, the Netherlands and Morocco – was the high point of a golden era for Saudi football.

After back-to-back AFC Asian Cup titles in 1984 and 1988 and a runners-up finish in 1992, Saudi Arabia made an instant impact at their first-ever appearance at the World Cup. A third AFC Asian Cup title in 1996 was followed by appearances at the 1998 and 2002 World Cups, a run to the final of the 2000 Asian Cup and again in 2007.

Three Gulf Cup titles from 1994 to 2003 underlined their regional dominance, while the country's clubs would be amongst the confederation's finest, with Al Ittihad twice winning the AFC Champions League and Al Hilal claiming the old Asian Club Championship crown.

But despite all the silverware, that day at RFK Stadium in Washington remains the high water mark; it is the standard by which







Left
2011 Asian Cup

all successive Saudi teams and performances have been judged.

As a result, exiting the AFC Asian Cup at the group stages in 2011 and missing out on a second successive FIFA World Cup – this time not even progressing to the final phase of qualifying – has rung the changes.

Prince Sultan bin Fahd stood down from his position as president of the federation after the exit from the Qatar Asian Cup while his successor, his nephew Prince Nawaf bin Faisal, stepped aside following the national team's failure to advance to the final round of qualifying for Brazil 2014.

Change was about to come to Saudi Arabia; not just the football fraternity, but society itself. In a country that has been ruled as an absolute monarchy since its creation in 1932, the Saudi Arabia Football Federation was to become the first official body in the country's history to institute an election for the position of president.

Ahmed Eid Al Harbi was instrumental in what would turn out to be an historic move. A former goalkeeper with both Al Ahli and the national team, Eid had long been one of the most progressive voices within Saudi football. Following Prince Nawaf's resignation, he – along with Dr Salah bin Nasser and Dr Majed Garoub – stepped in to run the federation and set about ringing the changes that would, eventually, lead to a first-ever election.

In the months after Prince Nawaf's departure, the federation's general assembly was enhanced, relationships between the clubs, the league and governing body improved and

statutes were put in place. By the end of 2011, the restructuring of the governance of Saudi football had begun.

"We started to get help from the clubs, the players, referees, trainers, everyone," says Eid. "I was very close to the Olympic committee, too. They have three members, and Prince Nawaf was heading up the committee, and so we reached the final stages. It was approved in order to do the general assembly.

"The first general assembly was at the end of 2011, so we made an election for the general assembly. Due to the regulations, we had to have appointed 63 members, so we did that according to the statutes."

With the first step complete, the election of the new president was the next phase, with the understanding that Eid – in recognition of his work and dedication in rebuilding the federation – would stand unopposed. That was until a challenger emerged.

"Khaled Al Muammar came in as the second candidate," says Eid. "I was a little bit concerned about how things went because we had decided that the first election would be me and then after we would have any other candidate.

"It wasn't the news I wanted to hear at that moment, but I accepted it and went back to Saudi to focus on my plan."

Election fever gripped Saudi Arabia. Both candidates canvassed for votes, attempting to swing public opinion in their favour via the media while, two days ahead of the vote, a

televised debate was held and broadcast across the nation. Despite only the 62 members of the General Assembly being eligible to vote, the entire country was engaged in the debate.

"When we were face-to-face, I went back to my old ways from when I was a goalkeeper and I was facing an opponent," says Eid. "I started to look at his eyes, to see him in a different way and I think I made him nervous.

"In my playing days, I knew that me and my colleagues on the team were there for each other and I knew the opponents very well and that there is someone there to help me.

"But face-to-face there is nothing to help you, except for your ability. During the debate I could feel how important this was, and I was speaking to the people and trying to give them the encouragement that I was supporting them. And I was paying back to the people in Saudi Arabian football what they had given me since I was a boy, playing in the street in bare feet and now I'm here."

Two days after the debate, Eid would eventually win the vote, emerging victorious from a nerve-racking count by just two votes, 32 to 30. He embraced his opponent and waved to the crowd, maintaining a dignified, calm exterior. Inside, though, it was a different matter.

"The pressure of my blood went to my head, and it was like Sami Al Jaber scoring for the national team! I've never been so happy in my life, except when we win the championship with the national team," he says.

After the euphoria subsided, the real work started: how to return Saudi Arabia to the



Below Saudi Arabian Football Federation President Ahmed Eid Al Harbi



Above
Saud Kariri

summit of Asian football.

"Before the federation was run through the welfare agency of the government, but now we need to think like we are in the private sector, thinking like a profitable company and when you talk about that then you have to change the whole structure of the federation with the help of FIFA and hiring the right people in the right places," says Eid.

"Before we set up all the three elements that need to be done in the right way – the administrative, organization, finance – we have to have our budget due to what we need and build a full technical department to set up everything for the federation and for the clubs.

"I have two examples I always try to follow: the German federation and the Japanese.

I can do much better by following those federations, but customised for our own culture. Also, when you look at Saudi Arabia, it is similar to Australia. We have a similar sized population and also the structure is similar to Australia and I have had several meetings with the federation and we have extended our relationship and the Asian Cup in 2015 will give us a chance to adapt to working with Australia.

"I think if we finish our plan in line with what we have now, Saudi Arabia will be back at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups with a strong national team. It might happen before because we have a very strong environment and we have very good young players and very good grassroots development."

But just as important as the on-field

improvements, Eid hopes the election can have a major impact on Saudi society at large.

"I believe this election should be studied in terms of culture, in terms of freedom, to be free to go to the box and put the name that you want and with no one pushing you," he says. "I want this election to be brought out to the clubs and most of the society, especially the young.

"I want the young people in Saudi Arabia to learn about this election in schools, in universities and in communities. Leadership is not easy to find, you have to work for it and we have to study and teach our children what the vote means. You don't give your vote to the friend you know, but to someone who will do something for the society, whether that's the football society or in the world."



THE PUNE WAY

PUNE FC WERE ONLY
FOUNDED IN 2007,
BUT HAVE QUICKLY
ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES
AS A SHINING LIGHT IN
INDIA BOTH ON AND OFF
THE FIELD.

By: Amoy Ghoshal Photos: World Sport Group/Courtesy of Pune FC

Becoming professional remains one of the biggest challenges for Indian football clubs, but one club that is making huge progress on that front is Pune FC.

A proof of their good work is the fact that they were the only Indian club to be granted the national club license last year after fulfilling the AFC criteria.

That eventually earned them a place in the 2014 AFC Champions League play-offs, and although Pune lost to Vietnam's Hanoi T&T in the first round, they did make their debut in the AFC Cup to cap a remarkable rise having only been formed in 2007.

Based in the city of Pune, which is located

in the state of Maharashtra in Western India, the club was formed by the Mumbai-based Ashok Piramal Group.

And the club has since gone on to become a benchmark for other clubs in India's domestic league, the I-League, by setting high standards in youth development and creating a professional environment for players to flourish.

They are one of the few clubs to have specialists in every department including video analysis and scouting, while Pune have also achieved many other firsts as they received the first-ever transfer fee in Indian football, were the first to organise annual club awards and the first to have their own online channel.

The club's youth policy, though, is their standout quality and it is even more







commendable because more established Indian clubs do not have their own academies.

Pune started their own residential academy in 2011 for the U-17s and U-19s, while there are plans to introduce U-15s to the same structure. Twice-weekly soccer schools also take place all year round for U-13 and U-10 teams.

Following its inception in 2007, the club competed in Indian football's second tier in 2008, but narrowly missed out on promotion to the I-League.

But they secured a place in the 2009-10 I-League a year later with key contributions from current India international Jeje Lalpekhlua, who was actually the club's first-ever signing.

Jeje, who is now with Kolkata's Mohun Bagan, was only 16 when he signed for Pune after being spotted during an India youth camp and spent five seasons at the club.

"My time at Pune FC was very special as they gave me the platform to perform," said Jeje, who arrived as a teenager but had established himself as one of the country's best strikers by the time he left the club.

"I have had some great highs with the club, but the I-League promotion was the highlight. I still remember we needed a win in the last game

against Sesa Football Academy to qualify for the I-League.

"We managed to do that and I also got on the scoresheet."

Besides launching the careers of many Indian footballers in the last seven years, the club has also been one of the most consistent teams in the I-League as they have finished in the top five in four of their five seasons.

Pune are yet to win any major trophy, but have implemented a self-sustainable business model meaning they do not spend their entire budget on players and instead have looked to run the club professionally.

They have attracted a number of co-sponsors and partners, ensured the best possible facilities for the players and coaching staff, while Pune have also built a reputation for promoting youth through their own academy as well as selecting promising players from around the country.

"We want to try and make Pune FC a self-sustaining business," said chairman Nandan Piramal. "Every organisation that is being built will have the goal of being self-sustaining and not dependent on any one person putting money in. That way, the institution lasts long. That is our aim - to build an institution."

Pune eventually finished third in their debut I-League campaign before claiming the runners-up spot in the 2012-13 season.

Indian Derrick Pereira has been the coach in the first four I-League seasons, although he left in 2013 and was replaced by Dutch coach Mike Snoei. Under Snoei, Pune finished seventh in the 2013-14 I-League although during that campaign they did make their maiden appearance in the AFC Cup.

Pune were eliminated in the group stage, but were unbeaten against the top two sides in their group and recorded their first-ever continental win, against Kitchee.

"We have been fairly consistent with four consecutive top-five finishes since we got promoted to the I-League in 2009," said Pune's head of operations Chirag Tanna.

"This season we have finished seventh, that's been our lowest ranking since 2009 and everyone at the club is very motivated to improve our performance for the 2014-15 season. That being said, we have a very young squad and this season a lot of the players experienced AFC Cup fixtures for the first time. I am sure the experience gained this season will hold us in good stead going forward."



One of the features of Pune this season has been the presence of several academy products in their first-team squad, with the club benefitting from their long-term vision of producing their own players.

They won the youth I-League in 2012 and 2013 and many members from those two teams are now pursuing their careers either at Pune or elsewhere in the I-League.

"I think that our youth coaches have done an outstanding job over the past three to four years to develop the best young talent in the country," said Tanna.

"Currently, eight players from our squad of 30 have come through our youth set-up. However, we cannot rest on our laurels and need to ensure that going forward more players come through our academy set-up and play the Pune FC way."

Pune, though, have a long way to go in terms of results, while they have further ambitions off the field, including building their own stadium to reflect a growing fan base.

But their progress thus far has been staggering. Many established clubs in India are being forced to play catch-up with the professional environment within the club that

Top Coach Mike Snoei

Top Left Last home game of the 2013/14 I-League season.

Bottom Left First I-League game against East Bengal.

Above Youth I-League Champions 2013.

Right Arata Izumi (right) playing against Hong Kong's Kitchee in the AFC Cup this season.

helps bring out the best from players, with Japanese-born Arata Izumi a shining example of what can be achieved.

Midfielder Arata, who was born to an Indian father and Japanese mother, joined Pune in 2009 and after becoming an Indian citizen in 2012, made his international debut a year later.

"I came to India in 2006, but it was only after joining Pune FC that I got closer to the country and took the decision of becoming an Indian citizen," said current Pune midfielder Arata.

"Pune are a highly professional club and that is very comforting for the players.

"It was the club's dream to play in the AFC Cup and I am glad that I could help them realise it."

Success on the field has brought with it a continued growth of Pune's fan base, with the club only one of four I-League teams to have reached 100,000 likes on their official

Facebook page.

Their online channel 'PFC TV' which offers live streaming of domestic matches, as well as highlights, interviews and news is being pioneered in India by Pune, with many other clubs now turning to similar initiatives.

Pune also engages in various community development activities including school contact programmes, regular coaching clinics and inter-corporate and inter-school tournaments.

They work with various non-governmental organisations and have formed partnerships to promote the sport largely among school children from low income communities.

The club also makes arrangements for children from various local schools and non-governmental organisations to attend their home games at Shri Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Pune.

So with Pune making all the right moves on and off the field, the next logical step is a first piece of silverware; a reward for a remarkable seven years of progress.

"We have come close on a couple occasions, but we really need to overcome the final hurdle and win something next season," added Tanna.



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Palestine Complete Asian Cup Line-Up

A GOAL FROM ASHRAF AL FAWAGHRA GAVE PALESTINE A LANDMARK VICTORY AT THE AFC CHALLENGE CUP IN THE MALDIVES, AS THE WEST ASIANS CLAIMED THE FINAL PLACE AT THE AFC ASIAN CUP AUSTRALIA 2015

Palestine will be the only debutants appearing at the AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015 following their victory over the Philippines in the final of the AFC Challenge Cup at the end of May.

A second half free-kick from tournament leading scorer Ashraf Al Fawaghra proved the difference in the final at the National Stadium in Male as Palestine's 1-0 win completed an unbeaten campaign without conceding a goal.

And with the fifth and final edition of the AFC Challenge Cup also offering the winner

the 16th and final berth at the AFC Asian Cup, Palestine will join defending champions Japan, two-time quarter-finalists Jordan and 2007 winners Iraq in Group D in Australia next year.

"We had many players who could not come with us this time due to problems, but we hope they can come with us to Australia," said Palestine coach Jamal Mahmoud, a former Jordan international with Palestinian heritage who guided Palestine to the semi-finals of the AFC Challenge Cup in 2012 having been appointed a year earlier.

"And we need to make more training camps and more tough friendly matches

before the Asian Cup."

Palestine, though, face the daunting prospect of opening their maiden AFC Asian Cup campaign against four-time champions Japan on January 12 at Newcastle Stadium before facing Jordan at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium four days later.

And with Group D paired with Group C that includes Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain in terms of quarter-final opponents, Palestine will round off their group stage campaign against 2007 champions Iraq on January 20 at Canberra Stadium.



"I think all of the people in Jordan are happy for me," said Mahmoud, who made 25 appearances for Jordan.

"They have always supported me. I think this is very good for Jordan to have a coach from Jordan achieving this success."

As for the AFC Asian Cup opener against Japan, a smiling Mahmoud said: "We will see what we can do."

With two-time AFC Challenge Cup winners DPR Korea having already secured their qualification for Australia following their win over Turkmenistan in the 2012 final, the Central Asians were the most experienced of the eight sides in the Maldives.

And Turkmenistan made the ideal start to their campaign in Group B with a 5-1 win over debutants Laos thanks to two goals from Didar Durdiev, while the highly-anticipated meeting between the Philippines and SAFF champions Afghanistan ended goalless.

But Turkmenistan's hopes of progress suffered a blow two days later as Afghanistan made a belated start to their campaign by posting a 3-1 win.

The Philippines also registered their first win as Simone Rota and Patrick Reichelt scored in each half at the Azkals beat Laos.

And Philippines and Afghanistan sealed

their qualification at the expense of Turkmenistan as Reichelt was again on target with 17 minutes remaining against the Central Asians after 2012 AFC Challenge Cup top scorer Phil Younghusband had opened the scoring just after half-time.



Afghanistan also completed their group stage campaign with an unbeaten record, although the SAFF champions were forced to settle for second place following a goalless draw with Laos.

The draw handed Laos their first point at a continental competition after Khampheng Sayavutthi had earlier netted his side's first

AFC Challenge Cup goal in spectacular fashion in their tournament opener against Turkmenistan.

In Group B, the Maldives endured a disappointing opening to their campaign as Myanmar claimed a thrilling 3-2 win thanks to two goals from Kyaw Ko Ko,

while Abdulhamid Abuhabib scored in the sixth minute of stoppage time as Palestine dramatically edged out Kyrgyzstan.

But the Maldives delighted the home fans as captain Ali Ashfaq scored twice in the second half to secure a 2-0 win over Kyrgyzstan two days later.

Palestine, meanwhile, maintained their 100% record as Abuhabib and Al Fawaghra scored either side of half-time to secure a 2-0 win over Myanmar, who were the only side in the Maldives with previous AFC Asian Cup experience having finished as runners-up at the 1968 edition.

And with the table-toppers Palestine and the Maldives sharing a goalless draw on the final Matchday to secure qualification from Group B after all four sides headed into the final round of fixtures still in contention for a place in the semi-finals, both Kyrgyzstan and Myanmar saw their



Group A

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Palestine	3	2	1	0	3	0	3	7
Maldives	3	1	1	1	4	3	1	4
Kyrgyzstan	3	1	0	2	1	3	-2	3
Myanmar	3	1	0	2	3	5	-2	3

19/05/14

Palestine 1 (Abdulhamid Abuhabib 90+6) Kyrgyzstan 0
Maldives 2 (Mohamed Umair 55, Ali Ashfaq 90+6)
Myanmar 3 (Kyaw Ko Ko 39, 90+5, Nyein Chan Aung 45+1)

21/05/14

Myanmar 0 Palestine 2 (Abdulhamid Abuhabib 45+4, Ashraf Al Fawaghra 50)
Kyrgyzstan 0 Maldives 2 (Ali Ashfaq 61, 71)

23/05/14

Maldives 0 Palestine 0
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Vladimir Verevkin 18) Myanmar 0

Group B

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Philippines	3	2	1	0	4	0	4	7
Afghanistan	3	1	2	0	3	1	2	5
Turkmenistan	3	1	0	2	6	6	0	3
Laos	3	0	1	2	1	7	-6	1

20/05/14

Turkmenistan 5 (Dovlet Bayramov 42, Didar Durdiev 50, 85, Vathana Keodouangdeth 55 OG, Bahtiyar Hojaahmedov 87) Laos 1 (Khampheng Sayavutthi 34)
Philippines 0 Afghanistan 0

22/05/14

Laos 0 Philippines 2 (Simone Rota 41, Patrick Reichelt 63)
Afghanistan 3 (Haroon Fakhrudin 45+1, Ahmad Hatifi 61, Faisal Sakhizada 86) Turkmenistan 1 (Suleyman Muhadov 64)

24/05/14

Turkmenistan 0 Philippines 2 (Phil Younghusband 49, Patrick Reichelt 73)
Afghanistan 0 Laos 0

Semi-Finals

27/05/14
Palestine 2 (Ashraf Al Fawaghra 43, 47) Afghanistan 0
Philippines 3 (Phil Younghusband 19, Jerry Lucena 38, Chris Greatwich 104) Maldives 2 (Mohamed Umair 36, Asadhulla Abdulla 66) AET

Third Place Play-Off

29/05/14
Afghanistan 1 (Hamid Karimi 114) Maldives 1 (Ali Fasil 118) AET
Maldives win 8-7 penalties

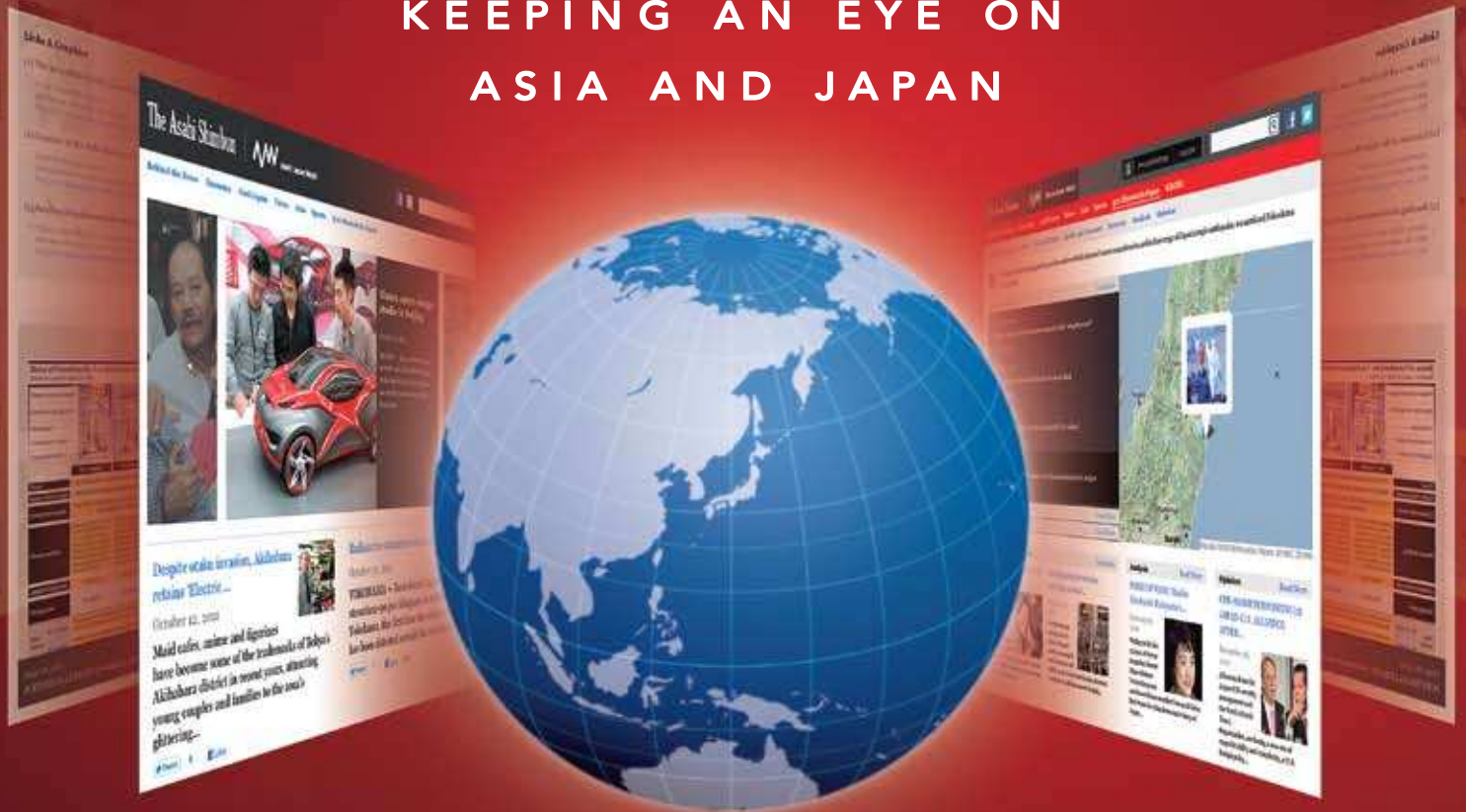
Final

30/05/14
Palestine 1 (Ashraf Al Fawaghra 59) Philippines 0



The Asahi Shimbun AJW

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campaigns end in the group stage despite Vladimir Verevkin's 18th minute strike securing a 1-0 win over the Central Asians.

And Group B winners Palestine built on their run to the semi-finals in 2012 as Al Fawaghra scored twice to edge out an injury-depleted Afghanistan side 2-0 in their semi-final.

The Maldives, though, failed to make full use of home advantage having won the 2008 SAFF Championship on home soil as Chris Greatwich's 104th minute winner secured the Philippines a place in the final following a thrilling 3-2 win after extra-time.

But despite missing out on a place in the final, the Maldives were able to end their campaign on a high as Ibrahim Fazeel scored the winning penalty as the tournament hosts claimed third place after edging out Afghanistan 8-7 on penalties following a 1-1 draw after extra-time.

SAFF champions Afghanistan had dominated a goalless 90 minutes and finally opened the scoring in the 113rd minute through Hamid Karimi only for substitute Ali Fasir to dramatically equalise for the Maldives with two minutes remaining.

And after Maldives goalkeeper Mohamed Imran saved from Faisal Shayesteh having earlier also denied Mustafa Hadid in a tense shootout, Fazeel held his nerve to claim victory for the home side.

"We must be satisfied with the bronze medal. Turkmenistan are two-time runners-up and they could not go past the group stage.

All the teams are strong and that's why the level is higher than the SAFF Championship," said Maldives coach Drago Mamic.

"We had home advantage, but without extraordinary quality within the team we could not achieve this. This game was the same as the final for me. I would have been disappointed if we did not finish third, but fourth would also have been good.

"This is a good platform for the future.



With additional work in the clubs we can achieve better results in the next year or two. This bronze medal means something for the future."

But it was Palestine who were left celebrating after 12 days in the Maldives as Al Fawaghra's 59th minute free-kick denied the Philippines as Mahmoud's side gained revenge for losing to the Azkals in the third place play-off two years earlier in Nepal.

Al Fawaghra's goal secured victory

for Palestine in the last edition of the tournament with the AFC revealing plans to revamp the qualification process for both the AFC Asian Cup and FIFA World Cup.

Under the new format, the AFC Asian Cup will be expanded to 24 teams, with the next edition set to take place in 2019.

The proposals will also see the preliminary round of qualifiers for both the AFC Asian Cup and FIFA World Cup merged.

And the eight group winners and four best second teams will then remain in contention to qualify for both tournaments through separate qualifiers.

The next best 24 teams from the preliminary round will then compete for the remaining place at the AFC Asian Cup.

Palestine's victory also came just days before individual match tickets for the 2015 AFC Asian Cup went on sale to the general public after sales of venue packs for the games in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and Newcastle had started in mid-May.

"I can assure everyone a warm Aussie welcome awaits them," said AFC Asian Cup Local Organising Committee CEO Michael Brown.

"We want fans to come to Australia from all around Asia, and the rest of the world, to experience a true festival of football and take home memories that will last a lifetime.

"Fans coming to Australia will see the best Asia has to offer, and they will see it at prices that are very affordable and family-friendly."



Champion Line-Up For Quarter-Finals

Defending champions Guangzhou Evergrande as well as former Asian champions Pohang Steelers, Al Ain, Al Ittihad, Al Sadd and Al Hilal secured qualification for the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League in May.

China's Guangzhou recorded a 5-2 aggregate victory over Japan's Cerezo Osaka despite losing the return fixture 1-0 at home; while Pohang, Al Ain, Al Ittihad, Al Sadd and Al Hilal all recorded second leg wins to claim victory in their respective ties.

Former finalists FC Seoul and Australian newcomers Western Sydney Wanderers completed the quarter-final line-up.

"We didn't do well. Our goalkeeper, defenders and midfielders made lots of mistakes which led to a sense of insecurity for the entire team," said Guangzhou coach Marcello Lippi.

"Our opponents didn't send their best team, so mentally our team was too relaxed. This game will be worth reviewing, and it also proved that Guangzhou Evergrande is not a great team because a great team wouldn't show such a loose attitude in an important match like this."

An own goal from Liao Lisheng in the 49th minute secured the win for Cerezo, but Guangzhou had already done the damage a week earlier after two goals each from Brazilian duo Elkeson and Muriqui secured a 5-1 win at Nagai Stadium.

"Sometimes our players seem lost, even though we are at the top in the domestic league and have also qualified in the AFC Champions League. But we need more and to improve continuously, and that is how we can become a great team," added Lippi.

"However, the most important thing is that we qualified. Not all the Chinese teams were able to reach the last eight of the AFC Champions League. We have three games to play before the next round, and in the second half of the year we have to sprint in every competition."

Three-time Asian champions Pohang, meanwhile, secured a return to the quarter-finals for the first time in three years as their 1-0 second leg victory over fellow K-League



Classic side Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors sealed a 3-1 win on aggregate.

Kim Seung-dae's sixth minute strike at The Steelyard extended Pohang's advantage having won the previous week's first leg 2-1 at Jeonju World Cup Stadium.

In the West, Asamoah Gyan scored twice as inaugural AFC Champions League winners Al Ain came from a goal down to beat United Arab Emirates league rivals Al Jazira 2-1 in their second leg to advance to the quarter-finals for the first time since 2006 after completing a 4-2 aggregate win.

"We had a great game against Al Jazira and we deserved to win and celebrate at home with our fans," said Al Ain coach Zlatko Dalic.

"The players worked very hard in the previous period and I want to thank them for the comeback victory.

"We didn't have a good start to the match and we conceded a goal

which affected us. However, there was good determination from the players to make a good comeback and we eventually scored two goals to win the match."

Elsewhere, teenager Fahad Al Muwallad

scored twice as two-time winners Al Ittihad stunned Saudi rivals Al Shabab 3-1 in their second leg to secure a place in the quarter-finals for the seventh time after securing a 4-1 aggregate victory.

And Al Sadd advanced to the last eight for the first time since winning the AFC Champions League in 2011 after a thrilling 2-2 draw with Foolad Khuzestan in Iran saw the Qatari side advance on away goals.

Goals from Nadir Belhadj and Khalfan Ibrahim put the Qatari side in charge, but they endured a nervous finish after Abdelkarim Hassan was sent-off and Brazilian striker Chimba scored twice to level the score for Khuzestan, who exited the tournament despite not losing a game.

Two-time Asian Club Championship winners Al Hilal, meanwhile, romped to a 3-0 win over Uzbekistan champions Bunyodkor in Riyadh with goals from captain Yasser Al Qahtani, Nassir Al Shamrani and Salem Al Dawsari completing a 4-0 aggregate victory.

In the East, Brendon Santalab struck with five minutes remaining as AFC Champions League debutants Western Sydney qualified for the quarter-finals on away goals after recording a crucial 2-0 win over J. League champions Sanfrecce Hiroshima.

And finally, at Seoul World Cup Stadium, 2013 finalists FC Seoul advanced to the quarter-finals for a fourth time in six years on away goals despite suffering a 2-1 defeat by Japan's Kawasaki Frontale.



Group A													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
Al Shabab (KSA)	6	5	0	1	12	8	4	15					
Al Jazira (UAE)	6	3	1	1	12	10	2	10					
Esteghlal (IRN)	6	2	1	3	7	7	0	7					
Al Rayyan (QAT)	6	1	0	5	9	15	-6	3					
25/02/14 Al Jazira 3 (Felipe Caicedo 3, Abdelaziz Barrada 9, Ahmed Gheilani 73) Al Rayyan 2 (Lucho Gonzalez 59, Kalu Uche 90+2) Esteghlal 0 Al Shabab 1 (Imad Khalili 58) 11/03/14 Al Rayyan 1 (Kalu Uche 14) Esteghlal 0 Al Shabab 1 (Ahmed Otayf 53) Al Jazira 3 (Ali Mabkhout 7, Abdulla Qasem 12, Juceledi 56) 18/03/14 Esteghlal 2 (Mohammad Ghazi 17, Hanif Omranzadeh 65) Al Jazira 2 (Abdelaziz Barrada 6, 56) Al Shabab 4 (Majed Al Marshadi 3, Ahmed Otayf 22, Rafinha 48, 56) Al Rayyan 3 (Kalu Uche 9, 41; Sayaf Mohsin 18) 02/04/14 Al Jazira 0 Esteghlal 1 (Mohammad Gazi 69) Al Rayyan 0 Al Shabab (Essa Al Mahyani 7, Hassan Fallatah 90+2) 16/04/15 Al Rayyan 2 (Yakubu 48, Musa Haroon 53) Al Jazira 3 (Abdelaziz Barrada 45, Ali Mabkhout 60, Cho Yong-hyung 90OG) Al Shabab 2 (Fernando Menegazzo 82, Saeed Al Dosari 90+5) Esteghlal 1 (Arash Bohrani 47) 23/04/15 Al Jazira 1 (Salim Ali 58) Al Shabab 2 (Abdulmajeed Al Ruwaili 35, 89) Esteghlal 3 (Boubacar Kebe 54, 73, Mohammad Ghazi 60) Al Rayyan 1 (Fahad Khalfan 81)													

Group B													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
Foolad (IRN)	6	4	2	0	11	3	8	14					
Bunyodkor (UZB)	6	2	2	2	7	7	0	8					
El Jaish (QAT)	6	2	2	2	6	6	0	8					
Al Fateh (KSA)	6	0	2	4	3	11	-8	2					
25/02/14 Al Fateh 0 Bunyodkor 0 El Jaish Foolad Khouzestan 0 11/03/14 Foolad Khouzestan 1 (Bakhtiar Rahmani 68) Al Fateh 0 Bunyodkor 1 (Bakhodir Pardaev 90+3) El Jaish 2 (Nilmar 34, 69) 19/03/14 Bunyodkor 1 (Vokhid Shodiev 90+2) Foolad Khouzestan 1 (Abdollah Karami 74) Al Fateh 0 El Jaish 0 01/04/14 Foolad Khouzestan 1 (Ayoub Vali 77) Bunyodkor 0 El Jaish 2 (Nilmar 58, Rami Fayez 89) Al Fateh 0 16/04/15 Foolad Khouzestan 3 (Rahmani Bakhtiar 21, Gholam Reza Rezaei 45, Luciano Pereira 90+3) El Jaish 1 (Nilmar 10) Bunyodkor 3 (Oleg Zoteev 43, Vokhid Shodiev 83, Alibobo Rakhmatullaev 85) Al Fateh 2 (Doris Salomo 68, Hamdan Al Hamdan 79) 23/04/14 Al Fateh 1 (Badr Al Nakly 62) Foolad Khouzestan 5 (Luciano Pereira10, 36, 44, Gholam Reza Resaei 78, 90+4) El Jaish 1 (Mohammed Muntari 52) Bunyodkor 2 (Sergii Symonenko 13, Sardor Rashidov 90+4)													

Group C													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
Al Ain (UAE)	6	3	2	1	14	7	7	11					
Al Ittihad (KSA)	6	3	1	2	8	6	2	10					
Lekhwiya (QAT)	6	2	1	3	5	10	-5	7					
Tractorsazi (IRN)	6	1	2	3	4	8	-4	5					
26/02/14 Tractorsazi Tabriz 1 (Karim Ansarifard 82) Al Ittihad 0 Al Ain 2 (Ibrahim Diaky 13, Asamoah Gyan 65) Lekhwiya 1 (Vladimir Weiss 40) 12/03/14 Lekhwiya 0 Tractorsazi Tabriz 0 Al Ittihad 2 (Mukhtar Fallatah 68, 75) Al Ain 1 (Asamoah Gyan 38) 18/03/14 Lekhwiya 2 (Sebastian Soria 22, Nam Tae-hee 79) Al Ittihad 0 Al Ain 3 (Asamoah Gyan 16, 73, Mohamed Abdulrahman 37) Tractorsazi Tabriz 1 (Milad Fakhroddini 42) 01/04/14 Al Ittihad 3 (Mukhtar Fallatah 16, Abdulfattah Asiri 26, 79) Lekhwiya 1 (Adel Lamy 21) Tractorsazi Tabriz 2 (Saeed Daghighi 20, Farshad Ahmadzadeh 61) Al Ain 2 (Asamoah Gyan 54, Mohamed Abdulrahman 59) 15/04/15 Lekhwiya 0 Al Ain 5 (Ibrahim Diaky 26, Alex Brosque 43, Mohamed Abdulrahman 57,Asamoah Gyan 70, 90+2) Al Ittihad 2 (Abdulfattah Asiri 18, Mukhtar Fallatah 60) Tractorsazi Tabriz 0 22/04/14 Al Ain 1 (Mansour Sharahili 22 OG) Al Ittihad 1 (Abdulrahman Al Ghamdi 36) Tractorsazi Tabriz 0 Lekhwiya 1 (Madjid Bougherra 73)													

Group D													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
Al Hilal (KSA)	6	2	3	1	12	7	5	9					
Al Sadd (QAT)	6	2	2	2	8	14	-6	8					
Al Ahli (UAE)	6	1	4	1	6	6	0	7					
Sepahan (IRN)	6	2	1	3	9	8	1	7					
26/02/14 Al Sadd 3 (Khalfan Ibrahim 18, Nadir Belhadi 87, Rodrigo Tabata 90+2) Sepahan 1 (Mehdi Sharifi 78) Al Hilal 2 (Nassir Al Shamrani 60, 74) Al Ahli 2 (Luis Jimenez 53, Grafite 58) 12/03/14 Sepahan 3 (Ervin Bulku 18, Mehdi Sharifi 72, Xhevahir Sukaj 90+1) Al Hilal 2 (Segundo Castillo 28, Thiago Neves 33) Al Ahli 1 (Grafite 68) Al Sadd 1 (Nadir Belhadi 24) 19/03/14 Sepahan 1 (Sergio Van Dijk 74) Al Ahli 2 (Ahmed Khalil 39, Ismail Al Hammadi 90+5) Al Sadd 2 (Tialal Al Bloushi 26, Nadir Belhadi 66) Al Hilal 2 (Thiago Neves 45+1, 56) 01/04/14 Al Ahli 0 Sepahan 0 Al Hilal 5 (Yasser Al Qahtani 3, Sultan Al Duayyi 28, Nassir Al Shamrani 34, 58, 62) Al Sadd 0 15/04/15 Sepahan 4 (Mehdi Sharifi 48, 56, Xhevahir Sukaj 63, Ibrahim Majed 90+3 OG) Al Sadd 0 Al Ahli 0 Al Hilal 0 22/04/14 Al Sadd 2 (Khalfan Ibrahim 34, Rodrigo Tabata 79) Al Ahli 1 (Grafite 15) Al Hilal 1 (Nassir Al Shamrani 45+2) Sepahan 0													

Group E													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
Pohang (KOR)	6	3	3	0	11	6	5	12					
Cerezo (JPN)	6	2	2	2	10	9	1	8					
Buriram (THA)	6	1	3	2	5	9	-4	6					
Shandong (CHN)	6	1	2	3	9	11	-2	5					
25/02/14 Shandong 1 (Liu Bin Bin 83) Buriram 1 (Adisak Kraisor 90+2) Pohang Steelers 1 (Bae Chun-suk 61) Cerezo 1 (Yoichiro Kakitani 11) 11/03/14 Buriram 1 (Adisak Kraisor 69) Pohang 2 (Kim Tae-soo 19, Kim Seung-dae 24) Cerezo 1 (Yoichiro Kakitani 84) Shandong 3 (Aloisio 5, Vagner Love 26, 56) 18/03/14 Pohang 2 (Kim Tae-soo 32, Kim Seung-dae 78) Shandong 2 (Vagner Love 13, 23) Cerezo 4 (Yoichiro Kakitani 4, Takumi Minamino 34, 82, Diego Forlan 90+3) Buriram 0 02/04/14 Shandong 2 (Du Wei 85, Hang Peng 90+3) Pohang 4 (Go Moo-ryul 35, Kim Tae-su 65, Kim Seung-dae 71, Liu Bin Bin 83 OG) Buriram 2 (Theerathon Bunamathan 10, Suchao Nutnum 41) Cerezo 2 (Tatsuya Yamashita 65, 88) 16/04/15 Buriram 1 (Kai Hirano 35) Shandong 0 Cerezo 0 Pohang 2 (Lee Myung-joo 23, Kim Seung-dae 65) 23/04/14 Shandong 1 (Vagner Love 19) Cerezo 2 (Yoichiro Kakitani 46, Diego Forlan 48) Pohang 0 Buriram 0													

Group F													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
FC Seoul (KOR)	6	3	2	1	9	6	3	11					
Sanfrece (JPN)	6	2	3	1	9	8	1	9					
Beijing (CHN)	6	2	0	4	4	7	-3	6					
Central Coast (AUS)	6	2	0	4	4	7	-3	6					
25/02/14 Sanfrece 1 (Kazuhiro Chiba 77) Beijing 1 (Ha Dae-sung 62) FC Seoul 2 (Osmar Barba 32, Yun Il-lok 56) Central Coast 0 11/03/14 Beijing 1 (Peter Utaka 20) FC Seoul 1 (Go Yo-han 71) Central Coast 2 (Mile Sterjovski 23, 32) Sanfrece 1 (Tsukasa Shiotani 21) 19/03/14 Sanfrece 2 (Yojiro Takahagi 53, Tsukasa Shiotani 79) FC Seoul 1 (Rafael Costa 60) Beijing 2 (Shao Jiayi 45, Peter Utaka 63) Central Coast 1 (Nick Fitzgerald 86) 01/04/14 FC Seoul 2 (Yun Il-lok 53, Rafael Costa 90+4) Sanfrece 2 (Gakuto Notsuda 20, Hwang Seok-ho 70) Central Coast 1 (Marcel Seip 73) Beijing 0 16/04/15 Beijing 2 (Shao Jiayi 55, Joffre Guerron 60) Sanfrece 2 (Naoki Ishihara 66, Zhao Hejing 70 OG) Central Coast 0 FC Seoul 1 (John Hutchinson 90+2OG) 23/04/14 Sanfrece 1 (Satoru Yamagishi 72) Central Coast 0 FC Seoul 2 (Kang Seung-jo 43, Yun Ju-tae 57) Beijing 1 (Yu Yang 88)													

Group G													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
Guangzhou (CHN)	6	3	1	2	10	8	2	10					
Jeonbuk (KOR)	6	2	2	2	8	7	1	8					
Melbourne (AUS)	6	2	2	2	9	9	0	8					
Yokohama (JPN)	6	2	1	3	7	10	-3	7					
26/02/14 Jeonbuk 3 (Lee Seung-gi 61, 69, Leonardo 72) Yokohama 0 Guangzhou 4 (Huang Bowen 59, Alessandro Diamanti 65, 85 Elkeson 71) Melbourne 2 (Pablo Contreras 37, Leigh Broxham 41) 12/03/14 Melbourne 2 (Nicholas Ansell 31, Kosta Barbarouses 80) Jeonbuk 2 (Lee Dong-gook 76, 79) Yokohama 1 (Jin Hanato 21) Guangzhou 1 (Alessandro Diamanti 38) 18/03/14 Guangzhou 3 (Gao Lin 17, 21, Liao Lisheng 61) Jeonbuk 1 (Lee Dong-gook 39) Melbourne 1 (Kosta Barbarouses 18) Yokohama 0 02/04/14 Jeonbuk 1 (Leonardo 76) Guangzhou 0 Yokohama 3 (Sho Ito 21, Kosuke Nakamachi 27, Shingo Hyodo 89) Melbourne 2 (James Troisi 7, James Jeggo 90) 15/04/15 Melbourne Victory 2 (Mark Milligan 2, James Troisi 90+1) Guangzhou 0 Yokohama 2 (Manabu Saito 64, 65) Jeonbuk 1 (Han Kyo-won 7) 22/04/15 Guangzhou 2 (Elkeson 11, 38) Yokohama 1 (Manabu Saito 85) Jeonbuk 0 Melbourne 0													

Group H													
	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts					
Western Sydney (AUS)	6	4	0	2	11	5	6	12					
Kawasaki (JPN)	6	4	0	2	7	5	2	12					
Ulsan (KOR)	6	2	1	3	8	10	-2	7					
Guizhou (CHN)	6	1	1	4	4	10	-6	4					
26/02/14 Kawasaki 1 (Renato 31) Guizhou Renhe 0 Western Sydney 1 (Brendon Santalab 1) Ulsan 3 (Kim Shin-wook 35, Ko Chang-hyun 43, Kang Min-soo 66) 12/03/14 Ulsan 2 (Yoo Jun-soo 84, Kim Shin-wook 90+3) Kawasaki 0 Guizhou 0 Western Sydney 1 (Mark Bridge 10) 19/03/14 Ulsan 1 (Rafinha 58) Guizhou 1 (Yang Hao 87) Western Sydney 1 (Labinot Haliti 3) Kawasaki 0 01/04/14 Guizhou 3 (Chen Zijie 39, 89, Qu Bo 52) Ulsan 1 (Yoo Jun-soo 34) Kawasaki 2 (Kengo Nakamura 74, Ryota Oshima 88) Western Sydney 1 (Labinot Haliti 24) 15/04/15 Ulsan 0 Western Sydney 2 (Mark Bridge 60, Brendon Santalab 80) Guizhou 0 Kawasaki 1 (Kengo Nakamura 38) 22/04/14 Kawasaki 3 (Yu Kobayashi 32, Yoshito Okubo 34, Jeci 77) Ulsan H1 (Rafinha 35) Western Sydney 5 (Shannon Cole 7, Labinot Haliti 75, Aaron Mooy 81, Shinji Ono 85, Nokolai Topor-Stanley 88) Guizhou 0													

Round of 16													
Guangzhou Evergrande v Cerezo Osaka 06/05/14 Cerezo 1 (Ariajasure Hasegawa 30) Guangzhou 5 (Muriqul 22, 84, Elkeson 34, 37, Gao Lin 78) 13/05/14 Guangzhou 0 Cerezo 1 (Liao Lisheng 49 OG)							Western Sydney Wanderers v Sanfrece Hiroshima 07/05/14 Sanfrece 3 (Naoki Ishihara 51, 65; Kosei Shibasaki 90+1) Western Sydney 1 (Tomas Juric 78) 14/05/14 Western Sydney 2 (Shannon Cole 55, Brendon Santalab 85) Sanfrece 0 Western Sydney Wanderers win on away goals following 3-3 draw on aggregate						
Guangzhou Evergrande win 5-2 on aggregate							FC Seoul v Kawasaki Frontale 07/05/14 Kawasaki 2 (Yu Kobayashi 49, Renato 61) FC Seoul 3 (Sergio Escudero 51, Kim Chi-woo 83, Yun Il-lok 90+3) 14/05/14 FC Seoul 1 (Sergio Escudero 9) Kawasaki 2 (Yu Kobayashi 29, Yasuhiro Morishima 90+2) FC Seoul win on away goals following a 4-4 draw on aggregate						
Pohang Steelers v Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors 06/05/14 Jeonbuk 1 (Lee Jae-sung 54) Pohang 2 (Son Jun-ho 58, Go Moo-ryul 74) 13/05/14 Pohang 1 (Kim Seung-dae 6) Jeonbuk 0							Al Ain v Al Jazira 06/05/14 Al Jazira 1 (Musalleem Fayeze 58) Al Ain 2 (Asamoah Gyan 11, Omar Abdulrahman 15) 13/05/14 Al Ain 2 (Asamoah Gyan 61, 81) Al Jazira 1 (Ali Mabkhout 17) Al Ain win 4-2 on aggregate						
Pohang Steelers win 3-1 on aggregate							Al Hilal v Bunyodkor 07/05/14 Bunyodkor 0 Al Hilal 1 (Salem Al Dawdari 38) 14/05/14 Al Hilal 3 (Yasser Al Qahtani 20, Nassir Al Shamrani 47, Salem Al Dawdari 58) Bunyodkor 0 Al Hilal win 4-0 on aggregate						
							Foolad Khouzestan v Al Sadd 07/05/14 Al Sadd 0 Foolad 0 15/05/14 Foolad 2 (Luciano Pereira 77, 87) Al Sadd 2 (Nadir Belhadi 16, Khalfan Ibrahim 29) Al Sadd win on away goals following a 2-2 draw on aggregate						



Kuwait SC Remain On Course

Defending champions Kuwait SC as well as former finalists Qadsia SC and Arbil joined Al Hidd, Persipura Jayapura, Hong Kong champions Kitchee and Vietnamese pair XM Vissai Ninh Binh and

Hanoi T&T in securing qualification for the quarter-finals of the AFC Cup in May.

In the Round of 16, all but one of the group stage winners drawn at home in the one-legged knockout stage progressed to the last eight.

Tournament debutants and Group C runners-up Al Hidd of Bahrain pulled off the lone upset to defeat the previously undefeated Lebanese double-champions Sifa at Beirut's Sports City Stadium.

Three-time winners and Group B toppers Kuwait SC crushed Al Hidd's compatriots Riffa 3-0 at home, while Qadsia SC, Jayapura, Kitchee, Ninh Binh and Hanoi all recorded comfortable home wins.

"The match was not easy as Riffa are a good side and they have good players who work well as a team," said newly appointed Kuwait SC coach Abdulaziz Hamada.

"We tried our best to use good attacks in the second period in order to keep Riffa at bay and we managed to do so.

"We hope that we can continue with the same performances in the next matches and we have a lot of work to do in order to retain our title."

Issam Jemaa opened the scoring for Kuwait SC just before half-time against the 2010 semi-finalists and Husain Hakim and Jarah Al Ateeqi converted late free-kicks for the home side as they advanced to the quarter-finals for the fifth time in six seasons.

Two-time runners-up Qadsia SC, meanwhile, made a clear statement of intentions as the Group C winners raced into a 3-0 lead by half-time against Jordan's That Ras Club with goals from Omar Al Soma, Saif Al Hashan and Mesaed Nada before Bader Al Mutwa sealed the victory with a fourth goal late in the game.

In Indonesia, Liberian striker Eddie Foday scored five goals as Jayapura followed up their Group E dominance by easing into the last eight for the second time with a



stunning 9-2 win over 10-man Yangon United of Myanmar.

It was the biggest-ever victory for a team in the AFC Cup knockout rounds, surpassing Vietnamese side Binh Duong's 8-2 rout of Malaysia's Kedah in the last 16 in 2009.

Jayapura also became just the second team to score nine goals in an AFC Cup game after Nasaf of Uzbekistan, who thrashed Indian side Dempo 9-0 in 2011.

"We are very pleased and excited with this victory that has taken Persipura to the quarter-finals," said Jayapura coach Jackson Tiago.

"This is a victory to be proud of, thanks to the good cooperation between the players, coaches and management of the club and the support of the people of Papua."

Also in the East,

Vietnam champions Hanoi T&T secured their own passage into the next round of the competition as Nigerian striker Samson Kayode scored twice to secure a 5-0 win over Myanmar's Nay Pyi Taw.

Trinidad & Tobago midfielder Hughton Hector, Thach Bao Khanh and Pham Thanh Luong also scored at Hang Day Stadium as the Group F winners recorded a sixth victory in seven games in the AFC Cup this season.

And joining them from the Southeast Asian nation were unbeaten Group G winners Ninh Binh who earned a 4-2 victory of India's Churchill Brothers thanks to a brace from Pham Van Quyen and goals by Le Van Thang and Sim Woon-sub.

Meanwhile, two goals inside the opening 10 minutes by Jan Kyung-jin and Lam Ka Wai were enough for Group H winners Kitchee to progress to a second consecutive quarter-final appearance after their 2-0 win over Arema Indonesia.

Elsewhere, 2012 runners-up Arbil booked their place in the last eight after edging out Lebanese side Nejme 3-0 on penalties.

After a goalless 120 minutes at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium, Jalal Hassan emerged as the hero for Arbil as the goalkeeper saved penalties from by Khaled Takaji, Khaled Hamieh and Kassem El Zein.

Finally, Bahraini newcomers Al Hidd advanced to the last eight in their maiden AFC Cup campaign as a second half goal from Abdulwahab Al Malood secured victory over Sifa.



Group Stage

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Safa (LIB)	6	5	1	0	13	1	12	16
That Ras Club (JOR)	6	3	2	1	9	4	5	11
Al Suwaiq (OMA)	6	2	1	3	8	4	4	7
FC Ravshan (TJK)	6	0	0	6	5	26	-21	0

25/02/14

Safa SC 1 (Rony Azar 84) **That Ras Club 0**

Al Suwaiq 3 (Mohammed Al Ghassani 30, Abdulrahman Al Alawi 59, Seidah Siriki 80) **FC Ravshan 1** (Numondzhon Khakimov 78)

11/03/14

That Ras Club 1 (Mohammed Talaat 84) **Al Suwaiq 0**

12/03/14

FC Ravshan1 (Solomon Takyi 69) **Safa SC 2** (Nour Mansour 23, Hassan Hazimeh 82)

18/03/14

FC Ravshan 2 (Numondzhon Khakimov 35, Solomon Takyi 79) **That Ras Club 3** (Ahmed Mjarmmesh 21, Mahmoud Mowafi 37, Baha' Abdelrahman 89)

Al Suwaiq 0 Safa SC 1 (Ali Nassereddine 18)

02/04/14

Safa SC 1 (Ali Karaki 74) **Al Suwaiq 0**

That Ras Club 5 (Baha' Abdelrahman 27, 75, Fahad Youssef 49, 51, Mohammed Talaat 67) **FC Ravshan 1** (Sayridin Gafforov 62)

09/04/14

That Ras Club 0 Safa SC 0

10/04/14

FC Ravshan 0 Al Suwaiq 5 (Mohammed Al Ghassani 24, 64, Ouday Abduljaffal 51, Al-Abd Al Nofli 54, Belal Abdul Daim 76)

23/04/14

Safa SC 8 (Ali Nassereddine 13, 52, Rony Azar 33, Mohamad Tahan 40, Ali Karaki 56, Nour Mansour 68, Jared Chouman 69, Taha Dyab 80) **FC Ravshan 0**

Al Suwaiq 0 That Ras Club 0

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Kuwait SC (KUW)	6	4	1	1	12	4	8	13
Nejmah (LIB)	6	2	3	1	4	3	1	9
Fanja (OMA)	6	1	3	2	2	6	-4	6
Al Jaish (SYR)	6	0	3	3	0	5	-5	3

25/02/14

Kuwait SC 2 (Javad Nekounam 67, Waleed Jumah 90+3)

Nejmah 1 (Akram Moghrabi 75)

26/02/14

Al Jaish 0 Fanja 0

11/03/14

Nejmah 0 Al Jaish 0

Fanja 2 (Abdulaziz Maqbali 42, Cisse Ely 53) **Kuwait SC 1** (Javad Nekounam 65)

19/03/14

Nejmah 1 (Akram Moghrabi 60) **Fanja 0**

Kuwait SC 2 (Javad Nekounam 42, Chadi Hammani 85)

Al Jaish 0

01/04/14

Al Jaish 0 Kuwait SC 2 (Issam Jemaa 67, 90+1)

Fanja 0 Nejmeh 0

09/04/14

Nejmeh 1 (Akram Moghrabi 90+2) **Kuwait SC 1** (Ali Al Kandari 82)

Fanja 0 Al Jaish 0

24/04/14

Kuwait SC 4 (Rogerinho 14, 58, Ahmad Al Saqer 24, Abdullah Hashem 62) **Fanja 0**

Al Jaish 0 Nejmeh 1 (Akram Moghrabi 27)

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Qadsia SC (KUW)	6	3	2	1	11	5	6	11
Al Hidd (BHR)	6	3	2	1	10	6	4	11
Al Shorta (IRQ)	6	1	4	1	3	4	-1	7
Al Wahda (SYR)	6	0	2	4	5	14	-9	2

26/02/14

Al Shorta 0 Qadsia SC 0

Al Hidd 3 (Akarandut Orok 15, 89, Abdulla Al Saqer 56) **Al Wahda 1** (Maher Said 25)

12/03/14

Al Wahda 1 (Mohammad Bashbayouk 30) **Al Shorta 3** (Amjed Kalaf 59, 60, Mahdi Kareem 90+3)

Qadsia SC 2 (Saif Al Hashem 72, Omar Al Soma 85)

Al Hidd 0

18/03/14

Al Hidd 0 Al Shorta 0

Al Wahda 1 (Osama Omari 87) **Qadsia SC 3** (Saif Al Hashem19, Omar Al Soma 38, Michel Simplicio 84)

21/03/14

Qadsia SC 1 (Omar Al Soma 39) **Al Wahda 1** (Maher Al Said 29)

02/04/14

Al Shorta 0 Al Hidd 0

08/04/14

Qadsia SC 3 (Omar Al Soma 3, 50, 74) **Al Shorta 0**

09/04/14

Al Wahda 1 (Maher Al Said 78) **Al Hidd 4** (Isa Musab-beh 6, Mohammad Al Daoud 42, Sayed Adnan 45+1, Paulo Roberto 56)

22/04/14

Al Hidd 3 (Abdulwahab Al Malood 11, Abdulla Fatadi 38, Akarandut Orok 60)

Qadsia SC 2 (Soud Al Mejmed 32, 45)

Al Shorta 0 Al Wahda 0

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Arbil (IRQ)	6	5	0	1	19	5	14	15
Riffa (BHR)	6	3	1	2	7	7	0	10
Shabab Al Ordon (JOR)	6	3	0	3	9	10	-1	9
Alay FC (KGZ)	6	0	1	5	1	14	-13	1

26/02/14

Alay FC 0 Riffa 0

Shabab Al Ordon 1 (Papa Diop 36) **Arbil 3** (Luay Saleh 53, Amjed Radhi 61, Borja Rubiato 88)

12/03/14

Arbil 6 (Hawar Mohammed 34, 52, 85, Jorge Blas 45, Halkor Mohammad 56, Farhan Tawfeeq 89) **Alay FC 0**

Riffa 2 (Saad Al Amer 55, 61) **Shabab Al Ordon 0**

19/03/14

Arbil 1 (Halkor Mohammad 35) **Riffa 2** (Mohamed Daije 40, Burhan Sahyouni 68 OG)

Shabab Al Ordon 2 (Oday Zahran 20, Ahmad Al Essawi 40) **Alay FC 1** (Vitalii Timofeev 25)

01/04/14

Alay FC 0 Shabab Al Ordon 1 (Abdelhadi Al Maharmeh 89)

Riffa 0 Arbil 3 (Luay Salah 74, Borja Rubiato 85, 90)

08/04/14

Arbil 3 (Luay Salah 3, 72, Borja Rubiato 89) **Shabab Al Ordon 2** (Rawad Abu Khizaran 45, Mohammed Shishani 80)

Riffa 2 (Geilson 45, Saad Al Amer 71) **Alay FC 0**

22/04/14

Alay FC 0 Arbil 3 (Borja Rubiato 16, Nabeel Zghair 54, Hawar Mohammed 65)

Shabab Al Ordon 3 (Oudi Al Qara 6, Oday Zahran 36, Mohammad Al Amleh 87) **Riffa 1** (Abdulla Shallal 85)

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Jayapura (IDN)	6	3	2	1	9	4	5	11
Churchill (IND)	6	3	1	2	10	7	3	10
New Radiant (MDV)	6	3	1	2	8	6	2	10
Home United (SIN)	6	1	0	5	2	12	-10	3

25/02/14

Persipura Jayapura 2 (Boaz Solossa 48, Ferinando Pahabol 62) **Churchill Brothers 0**

New Radiant SC 1 (Mohamed Umair 53) **Home United 0**

11/03/14

Churchill Brothers 3 (Cristhian Lagos 31, 75, Anthony Wolfe 53) **New Radiant 0**

Home United 1 (Yasir Hanapi 26) **Persipura Jayapura 1** (Ferinando Pahabol 74)

18/03/14

Persipura Jayapura 3 (Ian Kabes 43, Imanuel Wanggai 63, 68) **New Radiant 0**

Churchill Brothers 3 (Anthony Wolfe 16, Yunman Raju 26, Balwant Singh 90+1) **Home United 1** (Qiu Li 10)

02/04/14

New Radiant SC 0 Persipura Jayapura 2 (Boaz Solossa 37, 69)

Home United 2 (Fazrul Hameed 25, Indra Daud 72)

Churchill Brothers 1 (Emuejeraye Precious 27 OG)

09/04/14

Churchill Brothers 1 (Bahwant Singh 84) **Persipura Jayapura 1** (Boaz Solossa 78)

Home United 2 (Qiu Li 28, Bruno Castanheira 61)

New Radiant SC 0

23/04/14

Persipura Jayapura 0 Home United 2 (Fazrul Hameed 14, Jumdat Jantan 23)

New Radiant SC 1 (Mohammad Umair 40) **Churchill Brothers 2** (Naveen Kumar 64, Anthony Wolfe 67)

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Hanoi T&T (VIE)	6	5	0	1	14	7	7	15
Arema (IDN)	6	3	1	2	10	9	1	10
Selangor (MAS)	6	2	2	2	9	6	3	8
Maziya (MDV)	6	0	1	5	7	18	-11	1

25/02/14

Hanoi T&T 5 (Nguyen Van Quyet 18, 75, 84, Nguyen Ngoc Duy 77, Pham Van Thanh 88) **Maziya Sports & Recreation 1** (Ahmed Nashid 43)

Selangor 1 (Paulo 9) **Arema Indonesia 1** (Victor Igbonefo 72)

11/03/14

Maziya Sports & Recreation 1 (Mohamed Ahmed 51)

Selangor 1 (Steve Pantelidis 43)

Arema Indonesia 1 (Alfaro Gonzales 27) **Hanoi T&T 3** (Gonzalo Marronkle 20, 33, Nguyen Van Quyet 89)

19/03/14

Maziya Sports & Recreation 1 (Ali Amdhan 25)

Arema Indonesia 3 (Gustavo Lopez 31, Dendi Santoso 68)

Hanoi T&T 1 (Nguyen Van Quyet 52) **Selangor 0**

01/04/14

Arema Indonesia 3 (Alfaro Gonzales 25, 90+1, Gustavo Lopez 26) **Maziya Sports & Recreation 2** (Ali Amdhan 62, Abdulla Ibrahim 65)

Selangor 3 (Paulo 21, 32, 43) **Hanoi T&T 1** (Gonzalo Marronkle 36)

09/04/14

Maziya Sports & Recreation 1 (Mohamed Ahmed 59) **Hanoi T&T 2** (Gonzalo Marronkle 11, Nguyen Van Quyet 22)

16/04/14

Arema Indonesia 1 (Gustavo Lopez 45) **Selangor 0**

23/04/14

Hanoi T&T 2 (Nguyen Ngoc Duy 68, 75) **Arema Indonesia 1** (Alfaro Gonzales 15)

Selangor 4 (Paulo 34, 63, 79, Mohamad Azmi 83)

Maziya Sports & Recreation 1 (Abdulla Asadnulla 10)

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Ninh Binh (VIE)	6	5	1	0	18	7	11	16
Yangon (MYA)	6	3	0	3	16	17	-1	9
South China (HKG)	6	2	1	3	11	11	0	7
Kelantan (MAS)	6	1	0	5	9	19	-10	3

26/02/14

Yangon United 5 (Emerson Luiz 8, 45, Kyaw Ko Ko 28, 52, 89) **Kelantan 3** (Wan Zaharul 47, Badhri Radzi 63, 90+4)

South China 1 (Chan Siu Ki 58) **XM Vissai Ninh Binh 3** (Bryan Elroy 12, Dinh Van Ta 26, Tambwe Patiyo 50)

12/03/14

XM Vissai Ninh Binh 3 (Dinh Van Ta 12, 45, Vionea Petrisor 17) **Yangon United 2** (Cezar Augusto 27, 89)

Kelantan 2 (Wan Zaharul 72, Mohamad Ghaddar 84)

South China 0

Yangon United 2 (Cezar Augusto 36, Emerson Luiz 77)

South China 0

Kelantan 2 (Muhamad Nazri 37, Mohamed Khairul 45+2) **XM Vissai Ninh Binh 3** (Bryan Elroy 24, Tambwe Patiyo 50, Vionea Petrisor 62)

02/04/14

XM Vissai Ninh Binh 4 (Vionea Petrisor 11, Phan Anh Tuan 52, Le Van Thang 76, Bryan Elroy 80) **Kelantan 0**

South China 5 (Chi Ho Luk 8, Sasa Kajkut 15, 36, Chan Siu Ki 56, Lee Hong Lim 61) **Yangon United 3** (Kyaw Ko Ko 21, David Htan 45+1, Cezar Augusto 76)

08/04/14

XM Vissai Ninh Binh 1 (Pham Van Quy 86) **South China 1** (Sasa Kajkut 32)

Kelantan 2 (Mohamed Khairul 50, Wan Zaharul 55) **Yangon United 3** (Cezar Augusto 25, Emerson Luiz 64, Kyaw Ko Ko 80)

22/04/14

Yangon United 1 (Cezar Augusto 54) **XM Vissai Ninh Binh 4** (Dinh Van Ta 4, 85, Bryan Elroy 6, Hoang Vissai 65)

South China 4 (Lee Hong Lim 42, Andrew Barisic 75, 90+3, Lo Kong Wai 82) **Kelantan 0**

Round of 16

Safa SC v Al Hidd

13/05/14

Safa SC 0 Al Hidd 1 (Abdulwahab Al Malood 53)

Persipura Jayapura v Yangon United

13/05/14

Persipura Jayapura 9 (Eddie Foday 2, 23, 41, 43, 86, Timus Pae 10, Ian Kabes 28, 53, Titus Bonai 57) **Yangon United 2** (Cezar Augusto 16, Kyaw Ko Ko 21)

K

Committed to Excellence

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Debutant Trio Advance to President's Cup Finals

Debutants Rimyongsu Club from DPR Korea, Bangladesh's Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra Limited and Sri Lanka Air Force will feature in the finals of the AFC President's Cup after

progressing from May's group stage.

Former semi-finalists FC Httu of Turkmenistan, Nepal's Manang Marshyangdi Club and Mongolian champions FC Erchim completed the line-up for the decisive stage of the 10th and final edition of the AFC President's Cup, which will be played in September.

In Group A, unbeaten Sheikh Russel topped the table ahead of Sri Lanka Air Force to eliminate 2013 finalists KRL Football Club of Pakistan.

Sheikh Russel and KRL had shared a goalless draw in their group opener, but despite the Pakistani champions beating Ugyen Academy of Bhutan, they suffered a surprise exit after losing their final group stage fixture 3-0 to Sri Lanka Air Force.

Bangladesh league champions Sheikh Russel had followed up their draw with KRL by thrashing Sri Lanka Air Force and Ugyen Academy to ensure their spot in the final stage of the tournament with an undefeated record after scoring nine goals without conceding.

Sri Lanka Air Force, meanwhile, secured a crucial 1-0 opening victory over Ugyen Academy and, although beaten heavily by Sheikh Russel, bounced back to qualify at the expense of KRL.

Chinese Taipei's Tatung Company, who were second only to KRL in terms of previous AFC President's Cup campaigns of the sides featuring in this year's group stage, also failed to advance after losing to qualifiers Rimyongsu and FC Httu as well as Ceres La Salle from the Philippines in Group B.

FC Httu topped the group with an unbeaten record ahead of Rimyongsu, who crucially finished a point clear of hosts Ceres La Salle.

Finally, Manang Marshyangdi and hosts FC Erchim advanced from Group C ahead of Svaireng of Cambodia.

Group C had kicked off in enthralling fashion as Manang Marshandi came out on top of a nine-goal thriller with Svaireng in Ulaanbaatar.

Home favourites FC Erchim then secured a 3-1 win over Svaireng, before a goalless draw saw the home side advance alongside Manang Marshandi.

The final stage of the AFC President's Cup will be held from 22-28 September.



Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Sheikh Russel	3	2	1	0	9	0	9	7
Sri Lanka Air Force	3	2	0	1	4	5	-1	6
KRL Football Club	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
Ugyen Academy	3	0	0	3	0	8	-8	0

07/05/14
Sri Lanka Air Force 1 Ugyen Academy 0
KRL Football Club 0 Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra Limited 0
09/05/14
Ugyen Academy 0 KRL Football Club 3
Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra Limited 5 Sri Lanka Air Force 0
11/05/14
Sri Lanka Air Force 3 KRL Football Club 0
Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra Limited 4 Ugyen Academy 0

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
FC Httu	3	2	1	0	5	2	3	7
Rimyongsu Club	3	1	2	0	8	3	5	5
Ceres La Salle	3	1	1	1	5	4	1	4
Tatung Compan	3	0	0	3	0	9	-9	0

06/05/14
Ceres La Salle 2 Rimyongsu Club 2
FC Httu 2 Tatung Company 0
08/05/14
Rimyongsu Club 1 FC Httu 1
Tatung Company 0 Ceres La Salle 2
10/05/14
Ceres La Salle 1 FC Httu 2
Tatung Company 0 Rimyongsu Club 5

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Manang Marshyangdi Club	2	1	1	0	6	3	3	4
FC Erchim	2	1	1	0	3	1	2	4
Svaireng	2	0	0	2	4	9	-5	0

01/05/14
Manang Marshyangdi Club 6 Svaireng 3
03/05/14
Svaireng 1 FC Erchim 3
05/05/14
Erchim 0 Manang Marshyangdi Club 0



Japan Finally Land Asian Cup Crown

Azusa Iwashimizu's goal ended 37 years of continental drought as Japan won their first-ever AFC Women's Asian Cup title by dethroning defending champions Australia with a 1-0 victory in May's final in Ho Chi Minh City.

After netting a late extra-time winner in the semi-final against eight-time champions China, defender Iwashimizu was on the scoresheet after 28 minutes of the tournament's showpiece with her second vital contribution in consecutive games.

Rising highest to meet a cross from Rumi Utsugi at the back-post, Iwashimizu forced home a header past Australia goalkeeper Lydia Williams that would ultimately conclude an undefeated campaign in Vietnam for Norio Sasaki's all-conquering side, who added the continental championship to the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup.

"I thought to win the AFC Women's Asian Cup was one of my biggest projects, so the players did a great job. We came here to

Vietnam with one aim: to win the tournament and end Japan's jinx. We've done that, so it's mission accomplished," said FIFA Women's World Cup-winning coach Sasaki.

"For this Asian Cup campaign I couldn't bring some players because of conflicts with



their club schedules, but the young players who played instead of them have shown me they have good potential and have experienced good lessons for the future.

"The task for the next 12 months will be to combine these new youngsters with our more experienced players into one unit so we can

have a successful World Cup next year."

The competition finale was Japan's second meeting with Australia after they shared a 2-2 draw in their tournament opener before the Nadeshiko secured comfortable wins over hosts Vietnam and Jordan to take top spot in Group A ahead of the Matildas by virtue of a superior goal difference.

Then came Iwashimizu's dramatic intervention in the final seconds of extra-time against China as Japan secured a 2-1 win and booked their meeting with Alen Stajcic's Australia side who edged out free-scoring Korea Republic 2-1 in their semi-final.

"Japan showed us why they are one of the top two teams in the world. They kept the ball well, defended well when they had to and took their chances well. They have outstanding players and are a fantastic team," said Australia coach Stajcic following the final.

"My players fought to the death and showed tremendous effort but we need to improve just that little bit further in technique and execution if we want to be challenging the big teams like Japan on a regular basis."



China had earlier edged out Korea in the third place play-off when a last-minute goal from forward Yang Li secured a 2-1 victory.

"After playing 125 minutes against Japan in the semi-final only to lose in the last second, it was very special to win this match," said China coach Hao Wei.

"The players did very well in both the mental and physical aspect of this match. Winning this match and being third will help to bring promotion to women's football in China."

With the competition doubling up as a qualifier for the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup all four semi-finalists automatically received a ticket for the global tournament in Canada next year.

And with an additional place at next year's FIFA Women's World Cup available for the team finishing in fifth-place, Kanjana Sung-Ngoen scored twice as Thailand secured a pulsating 2-1 victory over hosts Vietnam to advance to the international showpiece for the first time in their history, despite a late long range strike from

Nguyen Thi Tuyet Dung.

"This victory and thereby qualifying for the World Cup is a very important milestone in our development," said Thailand coach Nuengrutai Srathongvian.

"This is the first time we've ever qualified for a global event like this, so I can say this is a first real step for woman's football in Thailand."

Japan captain Aya Miyama was named the MVP

of the tournament, while Korea's powerful striker Park Eun-sun netted six goals in five games to claim the top goal scorer honour.

Park finished at the top of the scoring charts alongside China's Yang, but the Korean striker claimed the award having contributed one more assist.

"Of course I'm sad that the team didn't finish as high as

possible, so while this award is good, it's bitter sweet as we didn't finish where we wanted," said Park.

"I hadn't been called up to the national team for a while and it took me some time to get used to all the systems again. The tournament went well, though, I scored lots of goals and bonded with the team."



Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Japan	3	2	1	0	13	2	11	7
Australia	3	2	1	0	7	3	4	7
Vietnam	3	1	0	2	3	7	-4	3
Jordan	3	0	0	3	2	13	-11	0

14/05/14

Vietnam 3 (Nguyen Thi Muon 18, Le Thu Thanh Huong 36, 84) Jordan 1 (Maysa Jbarah 34)
Australia 2 (Caitlin Foord 21, Lisa De Vanna 64)
Japan 2 (Claire Polkinghorne 71 OG, Yuki Ogimi 84)

16/05/14

Japan 4 (Nahomi Kawasumi 44, 87, Nanase Kiryu 65, Yuki Ogimi 69) Vietnam 0
Jordan 1 (Stephanie Al Naber 71) Australia 3 (Kathryn Gill 36, 51, Katrina Gorry 61)

18/05/14

Vietnam 0 Australia 2 (Le Thi Thuong 42 OG, Katrina Gorry 90)
Japan 7 (Chinatsu Kira 25, 90+3, Emi Nakajima 45+1, 75, Mizuho Sakaguchi 49, 81, Enshirah Al Hyasat 69 OG) Jordan 0

Group B

Group E	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Korea Republic	3	2	1	0	16	0	16	7
China	3	2	1	0	10	0	10	7
Thailand	3	1	0	2	2	12	-10	3
Myanmar	3	0	0	3	1	17	-16	0

15/05/14

Korea Republic 12 (Ji So-yun 4, Park Eun-sun 17, 43, Park Hee-young 33, Jeon Ga-eul 36, 40, 63, Cho So-hyun 45+3, 61, 82, Kwon Hah-nul 58, Yeo Min-ji 76) Myanmar 0

China 7 (Li Dongna 6, Li Ying 8, Yang Li 16, 45+1, 64, 90+1, Xu Yanlu 75) Thailand 0

17/05/14

Myanmar 0 China 3 (Ren Guixin 10, Ma Xiaoxu 60, Yang Li 87)

Thailand 0 Korea Republic 4 (Ji So-yun 11, Park Eun-sun 12, 47, 84)

19/05/14

Korea Republic 0 China 0
Thailand 2 (Kanjana Sung-Ngoen 27, Sritala Duangnapa 59) Myanmar 1 (Yee Yee Oo 45+1)

Fifth Place Play-Off

21/05/14

Vietnam 1 (Nguyen Thi Tuyet Dung 86) Thailand 2 (Kanjana Sung-Ngoen 48, 65)

Semi-Finals

22/05/14

Japan 2 (Homare Sawa 51, Azusa Iwashimizu 120+2)
China 1 (Li Dongna 80) AET
Korea Republic 1 (Park Eun-sun 53) Australia 2 (Katrina Gorry 47, Elise Kellond-Knight 77)

Third Place Play-Off

25/05/14

China 2 (Park Eun-sun 3 OG, Yang Li 90+3) Korea Republic 1 (Yoo Young-ah 80)

Final

25/05/14

Japan 1 (Azusa Iwashimizu 28) Australia 0



Sekiguchi On The Spot As Japan Retain Title

Defending champions Japan claimed a third AFC Futsal Championship title after edging out 10-time champions Iran on penalties following a 2-2 draw after extra-time in May's final in Vietnam.

Goalkeeper Yushi Sekiguchi saved three penalties in the shootout to hand Japan a 3-0 victory having twice come from behind courtesy of Kotaro Inaba and an extra-time own goal from Hamid Ahmadi after Farhad Tavakoli and Hossein Tayebi had given Iran the lead.

Uzbekistan, who beat Japan 2-1 in the group stage before losing to Iran in the semi-finals, finished third after beating Kuwait 2-1 thanks to goals from Dilshod Rakhmatov and Farkhod Abdumavlyanov.

"That defeat by Uzbekistan made us even stronger and a more solid family," said Japan coach Miguel Rodrigo. "If the group is initially united, these types of defeats unite us even more."

Japan, having begun the defence of their title

with a 12-0 win over Korea Republic, were able to recover from conceding in the last minute against Uzbekistan although the 4-0 win over Kyrgyzstan was only good enough to secure a runner-up finish in Group D.

But after beating 2012 finalists Thailand 3-2 in the quarter-finals, Japan sealed their place in the final for an eighth time with a 6-1 win over Kuwait semi-finals.

"To join this new team I made a dangerous bet by cutting off one or two players who had the experience of being champions," added Rodrigo, who was in charge two years ago in Dubai.

"And I thought of a plan that will continue to 2016 and our target is to get to the quarter-finals at least in the World Cup in two years' time." Iran came into the final with a 100% record after easing their way through their group stage with wins over Indonesia, China and Australia.

Jesus Candelas' side then beat tournament hosts Vietnam in the quarter-finals before downing Uzbekistan 10-0 in the semi-finals to take their tally to 50 goals in five games.

"I think that we were the best team throughout the competition, but that did not matter when it came to the final match," said Iran coach Candelas.

Artur Yunusov's header with just under eight seconds remaining saw Uzbekistan snatch a dramatic 2-1 win over Japan in the group stage.

But after beating Lebanon in the quarter-finals, Uzbekistan found Iran one step too far as Bahodir Ahmedov's side lost 10-0 in what was their only defeat of the campaign.

"Uzbekistan were not bad in this tournament, but we should now think about the next AFC Futsal Championship because it will give us a chance to qualify for the next World Cup, and that is why we brought a very young team," said Uzbekistan coach Ahmedov.

Iran duo Hossein Tayebi and Asghar Hassanzadeh, meanwhile, claimed the individual awards.

Tayebi scored 15 goals to top the scoring charts ahead of team-mate Hassanzadeh, who scored eight times to earn the MVP accolade.





Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Kuwait	3	2	0	1	11	5	6	6
Vietnam	3	2	0	1	13	7	6	6
Iraq	3	2	0	1	11	7	4	6
Tajikistan	3	0	0	3	5	21	-16	0

30/04/14

Kuwait 5 (Hamad Hayat 3, 22, Abdulrahman Al Taweel 13, 38, 39) Tajikistan 0

Vietnam 1 (Hussein Al Zubaidi 25 OG) Iraq 2 (Firas Mohammed 22, Waleed Khalid 40)

02/05/14

Iraq 3 (Amjad Kareem 18, Waleed Khalid 34, Karrar Al Thabeti 35) Kuwait 5 (Ahmad Al Farsi 2, Abdulrahman Al Taweel 16, 29, 30, Abdulrahman Al Mosabehi 25)
Tajikistan 4 (Khurshed Makhmudov 11, 28, Mansur Mamedbabaev 17, Sherzod Jumaev 28) Vietnam 10 (Tran Van Vu 10, Phung Trong Luan 12, 27, Ngo Ngoc Son 13, 27, Le Quoc Nam 15, Pham Duc Hao 16, Nguyen Bao Quan 25, 33, Ly Khanh Hung 37)

04/05/14

Vietnam 2 (Ahmad Al Farsi 18 OG, Phung Trong Luan 24) Kuwait 1 (Abdulrahman Al Mosabehi 40)
Tajikistan 1 (Khurshed Makhmudov 13) Iraq 6 (Mustafa Bachay 1, 24, Hasan Ali 15, 28, Waleed Khalid 27, Karrar Al Thabeti 35)

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Iran	3	3	0	0	25	2	23	9
Australia	3	2	0	1	8	9	-1	6
Indonesia	3	1	0	2	5	13	-8	3
China	3	0	0	3	4	18	-14	0

30/04/14

Iran 5 (Hossein Tayebi 8, Farhad Tavakoli 17, 17, Asghar Hassanzadeh 18, Vahid Shafiei 38) Indonesia 1 (Andri Kustiawan 30)

Australia 2 (Tobias Seeto 6, 39) China 1 (Zhang Wen 3)

02/05/14

Indonesia 0 Australia 5 (Wade Giovanali 14, Fernando De Moraes 20, Gregory Giovanali 38, Tobias Seeto 39, Daniel Fogarty 40)

China 0 Iran 12 (Asghar Hassanzadeh 1, 2, 25, Hossein Tayebi 1, 12, 27, 35, Farhad Tavakoli 5, Vahid Shafiei 10, 28, Farhad Fakhim 24, Hamid Ahadi 40)

04/05/14

Iran 8 (Hossein Tayebi 2, 10, 11, Mohammad Taheri 10, 29, Alireza Vafaei 15, Vahid Shafiei 17, Ahmad Esmailpour 28) Australia 1 (Daniel Fogarty 7)
China 3 (Zhao Liang 9, Wang Tianyi 11, Agustin Andrian-syah 40 OG) Indonesia 4 (Andri Kustiawan 3, 30, Caisar Silitonga 12, 26)

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Thailand	3	2	1	0	15	6	9	7
Lebanon	3	1	1	1	12	13	-1	4
Chinese Taipei	3	1	0	2	10	15	-5	3
Malaysia	3	1	0	2	8	11	-3	3

01/05/14

Thailand 7 (Jirawat Sornwichian 11, 12, Suphawut Thueanklang 26, 28, 36, Wiwat Thairaruen 31, Zubaidi Alwee 39 OG) Malaysia 1 (Asmie Zahari 11)

Lebanon 8 (Moustafa Serhan 2, Ali Tneich 17, 23, Mohamad Kobeissy 23, 23, 39, Ahmad Khair El Dine 28, Hassan Zeitoun 35) Chinese Taipei 5 (Chu Chia-Wei 9, Liu Chi-Chao 11, Huang Cheng-Tsung 18, 19, Le Chih-En 27)

03/05/14

Malaysia 5 (Muhammad Shamsul 1, 23, Nizam Ali 5, 11, Aula Ahmed 34) Lebanon 1 (Ali Tneich 16)
Chinese Taipei 2 (Lo Chih-An 24, Huang Cheng-Tsung 33) Thailand 5 (Suphawut Thueanklang 3, Jetsada Chudech 4, Piyapan Ratana 9, Kritsada Wongkaeo 24, Jirawat Sornwichian 33)

05/05/14

Thailand 3 (Kritsada Wongkaeo 21, Suphawut Thueanklang 33, 40) Lebanon 3 (Ali Tneich 1, Karim Abou Zeid 17, 40)
Chinese Taipei 3 (Chang Hao-Wei 14, Huang Cheng-Tsung 17, Weng Wei-Pin 26) Malaysia 2 (Asmie Zahari 20, Fitri Yatim 29)

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
Uzbekistan	3	2	1	0	7	3	4	7
Japan	3	2	0	1	17	2	15	6
Kyrgyzstan	3	1	1	1	6	7	-1	4
Korea Republic	3	0	0	3	1	19	-18	0

01/05/14

Japan 12 (Kazuhiro Nibuya 3, 35, Nobuya Osodo 6, 20, 31, Yusuke Nakamura 16, 33, 38, Akira Minamoto 29, Shunta Uchimura 31, Toru Sato 36, Kaoru Morioka 39) Korea

Republic 0

Kyrgyzstan 2 (Ulan Ryskulov 38, Emil Kanetov 39) Uzbekistan 2 (Erkin Tabaldiev 5 OG, Farkhod Abdumavlyanov 17)

03/05/14

Korea Republic 1 (Shin Jong-hoon 32) Kyrgyzstan 4 (Rustam Ermekeov 17, 27, Marat Duvanaev 37, Vadim Kondratkov 40)

Uzbekistan 2 (Andrey Shlema 10, Artur Yunusov 40) Japan 1 (Ryosuke Nishitani 9)

05/05/14

Japan 4 (Akira Minamoto 4, Kazuhiro Nibuya 9, Nobuya Osodo 17, 35) Kyrgyzstan 0

Uzbekistan 3 (Shuhrat Tojiboev 16, Davron Choriev 34, Dilshod Rakhmatov 39) Korea Republic 0

QUARTER-FINALS

07/05/14

Kuwait 5 (Hamad Hayat 21, 32, Abdulrahman Al Taweel 29, Abdulrahman Al Wadi 32, 34) Australia 2 (Tobias Seeto 33, Jarrod Bosger 38)

Thailand 2 (Suphawut Thueanklang 20, Jirawat Sornwichian 25) Japan 3 (Kazuhiro Nibuya 7, Nobuya Osodo 14, Maoru Morioka 36)

Iran 15 (Hossein Tayebi 3, 10, 25, Vahid Shafiei 11, Mohammad Shajari 12, 30, 32, Alireza Vafaei 16, 37, Asghar Hassanzadeh 25, 25, 27, Behroz Jafari 30, Farhad Fakhim 37, 38) Vietnam 4 (Phung Trong Luan 12, 28, Ly Khanh Hung 33, Pham Thanh Dat 34)

Uzbekistan 6 (Andrey Shlema 10, Andrey Shlema 25, 32, Shurat Tojiboev 26, Farkhod Abdumavlyanov 30, Artur Yunusov 30) Lebanon 2 (Ahmad Khair El Dine 38, Moustafa Serhan 40)

SEMI-FINALS

Kuwait 1 (Mohammad Mohamad 15) Japan 6 (Kotaro Inaba 5, 22, Akira Minamoto 21, Nobuya Osodo 24, 27, Shota Hoshi 29)

Iran 10 (Alireza Vafaei 1, Asghar Hassanzadeh 5, Hossein Tayebi 5, 25, 27, Ahmad Esmailpour 7, Vahid Shafiei 9, 24, 31, Mohammad Shajari 30) Uzbekistan 0

THIRD PLACE PLAY-OFF

Kuwait 1 (Mohammad Mohamad 15) Japan 6 (Kotaro Inaba 5, 22, Akira Minamoto 21, Nobuya Osodo 24, 27, Shota Hoshi 29)

Iran 10 (Alireza Vafaei 1, Asghar Hassanzadeh 5, Hossein Tayebi 5, 25, 27, Ahmad Esmailpour 7, Vahid Shafiei 9, 24, 31, Mohammad Shajari 30) Uzbekistan 0

FINAL

Japan 2 (Kotaro Inaba 26, Hamid Ahmadi 46 OG)
Iran 2 AET (Farhad Tavakoli 9, Hossein Tayebi 42)

Japan wins 3-0 on penalties

ACL Criteria & Slots Explained

Officials from the member associations and leagues attended a meeting in Kuala Lumpur at the end of April to learn about the latest participation criteria and slot allocation decision methods for the AFC Champions League.

The briefing introduced the new decision methods for AFC Champions League participation while also introducing revised criteria and club licensing matters.

The briefing also covered reports from the AFC Special Mission Teams since 2010.

"There were lots of decisions made by the AFC in November and January pertaining to our competitions' participation criteria and decision methods. The decisions made in January also have a sustaining effect on our competitions," said AFC Deputy General Secretary Dato' Windsor John.

"We have also taken feedback from the last CEO

workshop we held from which we drew up some proposals of change to the criteria. The workshop also helped us decide on the competition slots for a longer period of time.

"Therefore, the reason for having this briefing is to update the member associations and leagues about the decisions made which will have a great impact on club competitions in Asia.

"Through this briefing, we aim to ensure these decisions are clearly explained to you so that we can move forward and take our club competitions to the next level."

Under the AFC-UEFA Memorandum of Understanding, UEFA consultant Alex Phillips also attended the briefing.



One Goal Visits Vietnam

Ambassadors Steve McMahon and Do Thi Ngoc Cham leant their support in raising awareness of the importance of child nutrition during an educational tour highlighting various projects of the campaign in Vietnam.

Former Vietnam women's international Ngoc Cham and former Liverpool and England midfielder McMahon participated in activities aimed at educating mothers about the importance of preparing nutritious meals.

Ngoc Cham and McMahon exchanged experiences, stories and gifts with the children during the activities held

at nutrition clubs formed by World Vision Vietnam, who are focused on promoting good nutrition for children.

They also participated in training sessions and activities with football clubs as part of the child and grassroots football development programme Football for All in Vietnam.

The tour was organised by the AFC and One Goal, a partner driven campaign which includes the AFC and additional partners World Vision, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Royal DSM and the Asian Football Development Project.

ONE GOAL



AFC Medical Committee Meets In New Delhi



The AFC Medical Committee met for the seventh time at the end of April as the 2015 AFC Medical Conference was launched in New Delhi.

The committee, under the guidance of chairman

Dato' Dr. Gurcharan Singh, established guidelines concerning safe participation in AFC tournaments in hot conditions which, subject to approval by the AFC Executive Committee, would see breaks introduced during games to prevent heat-related injuries.

The committee also agreed to introduce a strategic development plan for football medicine in Asia aimed at providing comprehensive medical care and facilities for players at all levels.

A pool of instructors will also be established to implement FIFA Football for Health Projects in Asia, while an international seminar for team physiotherapists will also be arranged every two years.

The committee also recommended using the World Anti-Doping Agency accredited laboratory in Sydney for the analysis of samples during the AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015.



Dato' Dr. Gurcharan Singh also updated committee members on the progress of the organisation of the fifth AFC Medical Conference which will be held in New Delhi next year and is expected to be attended by 800-1000 delegates from around the world.

The committee's chairman also expressed his happiness following the productive joint meeting between the AFC Medical Committee and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) Medical Committee.

"With the formation of the AIFF Medical Committee, the AIFF has taken a positive step forward keeping in view the varied important oncoming football activities that augur well for the development of football in India," said Dato' Dr. Gurcharan Singh.

Tajikistan Holds Second Grassroots Festival

Around 300 children including 80 girls attended Tajikistan's second grassroots festival in April.

The children, who were mostly aged under 12, came to Central Stadium in Qumsangir from Kumsangir, Rumi, Jilikul and Panj to participate in recreational programmes including football skills and games.

All the children who participated in the festival were given a football to encourage their further interest and development in the sport.

"The aim of the festival is not only bringing up good players, but at the same time to inspire children into the sport, to keep them away from bad habits, to encourage healthy lifestyles and to develop both physical, moral and volitional qualities," said Anvar Mirzoyev, the head of the Tajikistan Football Federation's Youth Department.

Tajikistan, along with other AFC member associations, have implemented their own grassroots initiatives spurred by the AFC's Grassroots Year which was observed in 2013.



Coach Asia Programme Begins

A total of 26 coaches have enrolled in the new AFC Coach Asia programme, which began in Kuala Lumpur in April and is aimed at developing knowledge and experience.

The new initiative, which qualifies participants for the AFC Professional Coaching Diploma commonly known as the Pro Diploma, began with a fitness module which is the first of five modules under the two-year programme.

Professor Jens Bangsbo from Denmark and Dr. Magni Mohr from the Faroe Islands delivered the 11-day fitness module of the course.

"The AFC should be commended for its proactive and groundbreaking coach education efforts," said Bangsbo.

"For one, the AFC has clearly defined the lines in fitness training in the various levels of coach training, from the 'C' and 'B' certificates to the 'A' certificate and Pro Diploma.

"And there's a gradual increase in the intensity of fitness

training learning from the 'C' to the Pro Diploma. The AFC is the only confederation to do coach education this way."

Abdalnasser Barakat was one of the participants to attend the course, and was excited by the prospect of being given the opportunity to eventually become Palestine's first

recipient of the Pro Diploma.

"There is a lot of new information that we learned from this course," said Barakat.

"I will ensure that with this new knowledge and experience from the Coach Asia programme, the Palestinian game develops. With this new knowledge and skills, I feel that I have taken a greater responsibility.

"The instructors were excellent. They taught us

about fitness that reflected the reality of football. It was not just general fitness. The fitness we learned was specific to not just football, but also to each individual player's position. It's fitness training with the ball, instead of without the ball like in general fitness training."



AFC Can Build On Grassroots Success

AFC President Shaikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa has backed Member Associations to build on the success of AFC Grassroots Year 2013.

Last year, 14 Member Associations celebrated AFC Grassroots Day, and in 2014, 29 countries have officially declared their commitment to marking the occasion that coincides with United Nations International Day of Families.

"Last year was declared AFC Grassroots Year and I was delighted to see the way our Member Associations embraced the initiative, as children, parents, teachers, and other volunteers joined those in the football industry in enjoyable and educational events and activities that took place all over Asia throughout 2013," said Shaikh Salman.

"And I am particularly pleased that many of our member associations have continued to build on this as they continue to utilise the support and resources from the AFC and FIFA in addition to introducing their own grassroots projects."

The AFC's initiatives have included the organisation

of workshops to share the best grassroots practices as well as the introduction of an AFC Grassroots Coaching Course Curriculum and the introduction of awards recognising the developmental work of the Member Associations.

"We often refer to the AFC and our Member Associations as a family. This is a fitting description as we share many of the same principles of families such as unity, support and understanding," added Shaikh Salman.

"And the AFC will continue to support our member associations as we cannot underestimate the importance of grassroots development.

"Grassroots football is not just about the first steps on the pathway to finding the players and coaches for the clubs and

national teams of the future. It is about using football as a vehicle for social development and for fostering the enjoyment of a healthy and active lifestyle in children regardless of their ability, every bit as much as it is to identify those youngsters with great potential."



AFC President Visits Gulf Quartet

AFC President Shaikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa visited Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Bahrain and Qatar in May.

Having celebrated the Hong Kong Football Association's 100th anniversary alongside FIFA President Sepp Blatter at the end of April, Shaikh Salman attended the opening of King Abdulla bin Abdulaziz Sports City as well as the final of Saudi Arabia's King's Cup between Al Shabab and Al Ahli in Jeddah at the start of May.

Shaikh Salman then attended the opening ceremony

of the first phase of the Michel Suleiman Sports Village in Beirut before receiving the National Order of Cedar from Lebanese President Michel Suleiman.

The AFC President also held a meeting with South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) officials in Bahrain before attending the Emir's Cup final in Qatar as Al Sadd beat Al Sayliyah.

Shaikh Salman rounded off a busy month by attending the UEFA Champions League final between Spanish duo Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid in Portugal.



Coaches Take First Step In Lebanon

A total of 27 people took part in the AFC 'C' Coaching Certificate course which took place in Lebanon in April.

The 13-day course, which requires a minimum of 85 hours of study time for both the practical and theoretical sessions, is designed to teach coaches to organise, direct and conduct basic coaching practices targeting young players.

"We have finished the first part of the coaching course and we will continue with the next one," said

course instructor Mazen Mroueh.

In the final examination, the students will be assessed on their practical coaching abilities and knowledge of the laws of the game, as well as their understanding of the theory contents of football.

Holders of the 'C' certificate can, after meeting other requirements, progress through the 'B' and 'A' certificates



before being eligible to sit the continent's highest coaching qualification, the AFC Professional Coaching Diploma which is commonly known as the Pro Diploma.

NATIONAL OLYMPIC STADIUM

Tokyo, Japan

The 57,363 capacity National Olympic Stadium is an iconic sporting venue located to the south-east of Tokyo's central business district of Shinjuku. Completed in March 1958, the stadium hosted the first ever Olympics held in Asia, serving as the main venue for the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as the track and field

events at the 1964 Summer Olympic Games.

The National Olympic Stadium was also the host of the 1991 World Championships in Athletics, as well as the Intercontinental Cup between 1980 and 2001.

As a multi-purpose venue, the stadium is the home of the Japan football team and bore witness to their historic 1998 FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign, as the Samurai Blue advanced to the finals for the first time.

The climax to the AFC Champions League also took place on two occasions as Pohang Steelers lifted the title in 2009 with fellow Korean side Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma doing the same a year later.

In February 2012, it was confirmed that the stadium would be demolished in 2015 and a new national stadium built in its place to be completed in March 2019 and set to host the 2020 Summer Olympics.



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